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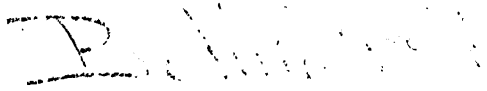

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The Philosophical Essays & Fragments were written from 1729 to 1735, and revised afterwards, but not published till after Bolingbroke's death. He refers to Butler's Analogy, which was not published till 1736. See the Fragments Vol. 8. p. 374.

ERRATA.

P. 4. l. 8. *for* stops *read* stop.
93. l. 15. and 7. from the bottom, *for* Lock *read* Locke.
202. l. 4. *for* carried. *read* carried?
5. *for* dress? *read* dress.
279. l. 15. *for* chance. *read* chance?
283. l. 17. *dele* of
18. *for* knowledge, *read* knowledge)
295. l. 15, 16. from the bottom, *for* qualities. If *read* qualities of
379. l. 4. from the bottom, *for* mentem. *read* mentem;

A

LETTER

OCCASIONED BY ONE OF

Archbishop TILLOTSON'S SERMONS;

AND

ESSAYS addressed to Mr. POPE,

ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

A

LETTER

OCCASIONED BY ONE OF

Archbishop TILLOTSON's Sermons.

I COME from reading, in Barbeyrac's translation of Tillotson's Sermons, the discourse you mentioned on a late occasion; and the effect of it has been to confirm me in this opinion, that the theist is a much more formidable enemy to the atheist than the divine. The former takes all the real advantages against a common adversary, which the latter has it in his power to take; but he gives none against himself, as the latter is forced to do. When the divine writes or disputes on any subject, relative to his profession, he is always embarrassed by his theological system; whether his mind be so or not, his tongue and his pen cannot be otherwise. A theist is under no constraint of this kind. He may speak the truth, such as it appears to him, when the divine, though it appears the same to him, must be silent. The theist may be silent, by regards of prudence, when the divine is obliged

to speak, by the obligation of his profession, and to maintain what he cannot defend, as well as what he can: and thus if he imposes on some, he exposes himself to the attacks of others. When the theist has demonstrated the existence of a supreme and all-perfect Being, and the moral obligations of his rational creatures, he stops, where the means of human knowledge stops, and makes no vain and presumptuous efforts to go beyond them, by the help of reason and revelation. Just so, when he has proved that the world had a beginning, on foundations of the highest probability tradition can give, he stops short likewise; because, in the nature of things, we can have no other proof of the fact. Not so the divine. His system drags him on. He attempts, most absurdly, to support, in the first case, a demonstrated truth by false arguments, and, in the second, to make tradition vouch for more than any receivable tradition does or can vouch. The Archbishop, himself, seems sensible of this in one place: for having asserted the universal assent of mankind to this great truth, that there is a God, and having ascribed the universality of this assent to the nature of the human mind, on which God has impressed an innate idea of himself, he tries to evade the absurdity by adding, "or which, that is the human mind, is so disposed, "that men may discover, by the due use of it's "faculties, the existence of God." He endeavours to evade the theological absurdity, which he could not maintain, but he endeavoured it in vain:

vain: for it is evidently false, that the two propositions are in any sort the same. The difference between affirming that the mind of man is able by a due use of it's faculties, to discover the existence of God, and that the mind of man has an innate idea of this existence, which prevents and excludes the use of any mental faculties, except that of bare perception, is too obvious to be insisted upon.

Divines reason, sometimes, on this subject with more precaution. They slide over the doctrine of innate ideas, without maintaining, or renouncing it directly; and think it sufficient to say, that the belief of a God is founded on a certain natural proportion, which there is, between this great truth and the conceptions of the human mind. I inclined, as you know, to think in the same manner, and to believe, that the first men, at least, who knew that they were such, and who saw the material world begin, would be led, by the natural conceptions of their minds, to acknowledge a first Cause, of infinite wisdom and power, and far above all these conceptions. Thus it seemed to me, that the tradition of a fact, and of an opinion grounded on it, which are apt to be confounded, though they should be always distinguished, might come down together. But I confess myself obliged, on further reflection, to abandon this hypothesis. I abandon it with the less regret, because, whatever the first men might think, nay, whether the world had a beginning in time, as I am firmly persuaded it had, or not,

the demonstration of God's existence will remain unshaken. But I am obliged to abandon it, because a natural and intimate proportion between the existence of God, and the universal conceptions of the human mind, may appear chimerical, and perhaps is so. It is, I doubt, chimerical, even when it is applied to the first men. The variety of the phænomena, which struck their senses, would lead the generality, most probably, to imagine a variety of causes, and more observations and deeper reflexions, than the first men could make, were necessary to prove the unity of the first cause. That some made them, at least very early, can scarce be doubted. So that the orthodox belief and polytheism might grow up together, though the latter might spread wider and faster than the former.

If there was really such a proportion, or such a conformity, as is assumed, particular men, philosophers here and there, might have held polytheism notwithstanding this; but the general opinion of mankind would have been the orthodox opinion, instead of which we know that polytheism and idolatry prevailed almost every where. Polytheism and idolatry, therefore, seem more conformable to human ideas, abstracted from the first appearances of things, and better proportioned, by an analogy of human conceptions, to the uncultivated reason of mankind, and to understandings not sufficiently informed. Our Archbishop supposes it objected to him, that the general consent of mankind in acknowledging one

God

God does not prove that there is one, any more than the general consent of numberless nations in acknowledging several proves that there are several. He answers the objection by saying, that philosophers and wise men, in every nation and in every age, were of a different opinion from the vulgar, so that the heterodox opinion cannot pretend to have general consent on it's side, since the opinions of the vulgar, opposed to those of philosophers and wise men, can be received into this reckoning no otherwise than like a multitude of noughts without any figure. This is strange reasoning to fall from the pen of so great a man. It is certain, that the orthodox belief maintained itself in some minds, perhaps in some nations, and pierced through all the darkness of ignorant ages; but yet polytheism, and the consequence of it, idolatry, were avowed and taught by legislators and by philosophers. Neither will it avail any thing to say, that these men had their inward, as well as their outward doctrine, and that they taught, in private, the contrary of what they taught in public. On this very supposition it will still follow, that polytheism and idolatry prevailed more easily, because they were more conformable to the natural conceptions of the human mind, than the belief of one first intelligent Cause, the sole creator, preserver, and governor of all things. It is absurd to say, that the consent of some wise men, and even of some nations, instructed and governed by them, in the acknowledgment of

one Supreme Being, is a proof that this idea is innate in all men, or universally proportioned to the conceptions of all men, and to deny that the almost universal consent of mankind, in the acknowledgement of several gods, is a proof of the contrary.

If you are not very well satisfied with these theological reasonings, as I think you are not, you will be no better satisfied with the manner in which our archbishop attempts to prove that the world had a beginning. The question which is commonly put to those who maintain the eternity of it would be trifling, as well as trite, if it did not oblige the atheist to give an answer which implies, in his mouth, the greatest absurdity, and makes him pronounce, in effect, his own condemnation. Tillotson takes this advantage, as I have done; but he throws it away, when he has taken it, by applying it against those who make the world more antient than the theological æra makes it to be, though they do not believe it eternal. He asserts that the most antient histories were writ long after this æra, and quotes to prove it some verses of Lucretius, finely writ, but very little to the purpose, because of no authority in this case.

" ———Si nulla fuit genitalis origo
" Terrarum et cœli, semperque eterna fuêre;
" Cur supra bellum Thebanum, et funera Trojæ,
" Non alias alii quoque res cecinêre poëtæ?"

Men

Men have been always fond, not only to carry the originals of their several nations as far back as they could, and to represent them, sometimes, as coeval with the world itself, but to establish their own, or the traditions which had come to them, as the most ancient of all traditions. Thus the Roman poet employed those of Greece to prove that the world had not begun very long before the wars of Thebes and of Troy. The world had a beginning, says the Jew; for there is neither history nor tradition more ancient than Moses; and we know by his writings how, and how long ago, the world was created. If we bring a Chinese into the scene, he will assure us that the world had a beginning; because the cycles, of three-score years each, in the chronological tables of his nation, do not rise any higher than Hoam-Ti, who reigned about four thousand four hundred years before our æra; that from him to Xin-num, the succcessor of Fohi, there are not more than three hundred and eighty years, and that Fohi was the first that civilised mankind. It was he, will the Chinese continue to say, who left us the adorable and hitherto incomprehensible Yekin, in the explication of which our learned men have laboured these two thousand six hundred years. It was Fohi and Xin-num who taught men the use of the plough, who invented letters, and to whom all arts and sciences owe their original. Let a learned Mexican come forward next, and he will assure you, not only, that the world began, but that the time when it began is known; for

we

we had but nine kings before Montezuma, will this great chronologer say. Tenuch was the first of them, and the founder of our monarchy; our hieroglyphical annals rise no higher; we know nothing beyond him; this calculation is confirmed by that of our neighbours, whose traditions place the destruction of the last sun, and the beginning of this, but a little before our æra. Let a Peruvian follow the Mexican, he will assure us, that the inca Manco-Capac preceded Atahualpa about four hundred years; that he and his sister Coya-Mama-Oella-Huaco were sent, at that time, by their father, the sun, to civilise mankind, who could not have been long in being, since they had neither polity nor religion, since they knew neither how to build houses, spin wool or cotton to cover their nakedness, nor to till their lands. These are the traditions of the east and of the west. The former make the world more ancient than those of the Jews, as they stand in the Hebrew, at least; the latter place the commencement of it about the beginning of the twelfth century of the christian æra, that is about the time of your king Louis le Gros, and of our first Norman princes. Our learned Europeans may laugh, as much as they please, at these learned Americans: but they must not be offended, if they are laughed at, in their turn, by those who think, that if Cadmus, the cook of a certain king of Sidon, carried the use of letters, and his son, or his grandson, Bacchus, the culture of the vine, to the Greeks three thousand years before

Manco-

Manco-Capac civilised the Peruvians, it may very well be, that the Atlantic, or some other nation still more unknown to us, had made all these improvements, by a long experience, three thousand years before the Greeks, or even their masters, who boasted of a much greater antiquity, the Egyptians.

A crowd of reflections presents itself; but these may serve to show how ridiculous it is, while we receive on the faith of universal tradition this fact, "the world had a beginning," to go about to fix the æra of it according to those of any particular nations. The negative argument, "we have no memorials beyond such a time," proves nothing but our ignorance; and the positive argument, that "we have relations of the beginning of arts "and sciences in several countries," proves nothing more than what it is very needless to prove; I mean that there was a time, when every one of these nations began to be civilised. Neither of these arguments is of weight against the atheist who asserts the eternity of the world. But they give him an advantage, such as it is, which bad arguments give frequently in polemical writings; and having refuted these, he may triumph, as if he had refuted all the rest, which is a practice very common among his adversaries the divines.

If the divine had not more at heart to establish the credit of Jewish traditions than the commencement of the world, he would not proceed as he does. He would not neglect the universal tradition

tion of a naked fact, such as tradition may preserve, to insist on particular traditions of a fact so complicated with circumstances, that no tradition could preserve it. These circumstances might make the fact doubtful; the fact will never make them probable. Even that of the time, when the present system of things began, has been supported weakly, I will not, though, I think, I might say fraudulently, by Jewish Rabbins and by Christian doctors, from Julius Africanus, and Eusebius, and George the monk, down to Stillingfleet, whom I mention, particularly, because Tillotson ventures to assert, that he has proved, in his Origines Sacræ, the chronological traditions of the Egyptians and the Chaldæans to agree with those of the Bible. If he had proved this, which he has not, most certainly he would have proved nothing more than what the Mexicans assert, that the traditions of two or three neighbouring nations, all derived probably enough from one original, are conformable to one another. But it is, indeed, too bold an imposition to pretend to prove, by descending into particulars of facts and dates, any thing of this kind. Our learned antiquaries have no other materials than a certain number of broken, incoherent, and precarious traditions. These they make to cohere, for the most part, by guess, and then drag them to a seeming conformity with the Mosaical system, which they assume, all along, to be true, while they pretend to prove it to be so by collateral evidence. I will only add, to show

how

how impertinent all this admired learning ought to be deemed, that by little differences, in the arrangement of the same materials, and by no greater liberty of guessing, distinct, opposite, and yet equal probabilities may be made to result from them. I affirm this the more confidently, because I tried it once, as you may remember, and we both thought that the trial succeeded very plausibly.

But without insisting any longer on this head; to show how divines weaken the short and plain proof that we have of the beginning of the world, let us grant, for argument's sake, that the most ancient traditions are the Mosaical, and that arts and sciences have not been invented more than four or five thousand years, or more or less as they think fit. Will they prove, even by this concession, that the world has had a beginning? They cannot: for the atheist will object that he may have reason to think the world eternal, without being obliged to think the arts and sciences eternal likewise. He will maintain it to be indifferent, in his hypothesis, when or where they began; since at whatever æra the divine places this beginning, an eternity must have preceded this æra. The divine, therefore, will be obliged to show, that it implies contradiction to assert that the world is from eternity, and not to assert that arts and sciences are so likewise. He will endeavour this by assuming, as Tillotson does, that arts and sciences are necessary to the well-being of mankind, and even to their

their being; that necessity, the great mother of industry and of invention, set mankind to work as soon, and as fast, as the species began and multiplied, in some places with more, in others with less, of these, but in all with as much as their real wants required. Since you agree then, will the divine say to the atheist, that arts and sciences began about the time we have fixed, the world must have begun about the time we have fixed likewise. This reasoning is commonly employed against those atheists who assume, that the world is eternal. But without being one of their number, I venture to say that this reasoning is frivolous, and founded on a supposition, which the men who make it must know to be false. The different æras of arts and sciences, invented in some countries, and carried into others, are so distant, even according to the received chronology, that the men who dispensed with the want of them, during such long intervals, might have dispensed with it longer, and in many cases always. Are there not nations, at this hour, whose originals are unknown to us, who may be the aborigines of the countries they inhabit, and who are ignorant, not only of all science, but of many arts supposed necessary; not only of letters, for instance, but of those which serve to defend us against the inclemency of the air and the rigour of the seasons, by making clothes and building houses sufficient for this purpose? These arts must have their place, surely, among those which Tillotson reckons so necessary, or,

at

at least, so useful to mankind, that they could not fail to be invented, nor, when they were invented, to be preserved. But his reasoning will not hold here neither; for if these arts were ever known to the people, to whom they are now unknown, they may be totally lost, after having been once found; nay, they may have been found, lost, and found anew, an infinite number of times, in an eternal duration. If these arts were never known to the people, to whom they are now unknown, it follows that mankind may dispense with the want of them during many ages, and therefore, always. We may easily conceive that Samojedes, Hottentots, and other nations as barbarous and ignorant as these, have always been, and will always remain, in the same state of barbarity and ignorance.

Tillotson was led by his prejudices, and by the examples of men, much inferior to him, in the herd of divines, into the two absurdities I have observed to you already; into that of proving the commencement of the world by the authority of particular traditions, which considered separately amount to no proof at all, instead of resting his proofs solely on the authority of universal tradition: and into that of confounding traditions of opinion with traditions of fact. He insists not only on traditions which concur in affirming that the world began, but on those which enter into a detail of circumstances, concerning the manner in which it began. Nay more, he joins the existence of God and the commencement

commencement of the world together, as if tradition was proper alike to prove both these truths. His proceeding is much the same with that of Maximus of Tyre, whom he cites after Grotius. Both he and Grotius might have quoted this rhetor, though they were far from doing so, against Eusebius, who was unwilling to allow that the Supreme Being was acknowledged by the heathens before christianity had enlightened the world; but the quotation of him, on this occasion, proves nothing, and serves only to show, that our divines declaim as loosely as the heathen philosopher. Maximus of Tyre alleges the universal consent of mankind in one law or tradition, so I believe those words Νομον και Λογον, should be translated, "legem famamque," and not, as Tillotson translates them, "law and principle." Now this law and tradition, according to Maximus of Tyre, declares, that there is one God, the king and father of all things, and several other gods, the sons of the Supreme, who take their parts with him in the government of the world. Maximus was a Platonician, and he meant, no doubt, to give reputation to the dogmas of his sect, by assuming them all to be received in one general tradition by the Greek and the Barbarian; by those who inhabit the continent, and by those who live on the coasts of the sea; by those who have wisdom, and those who have none. Tillotson was a Christian, and he meant to make the dogmas of his sect, as well concerning the beginning of the world, as concerning

cerning the creator of it, to pass for those of universal tradition. If we suppose that the first men were led, instantly, by the phænomena, and without any other demonstration, to acknowledge a supreme intelligent cause, the opinion rose from the fact, of which they were witnesses; but it was opinion still in them, though it became afterward demonstrated knowledge. Now divines transpose this order, and make the creation of the world, which tradition vouches primarily, to be, as it were, a secondary tradition; that is, they make the tradition of fact to follow the opinion, instead of making the opinion to be founded on the fact. They give great advantage to the atheist, by blending all these things together, for the atheist will not, though the theist will, distinguish what they have confounded. He will look on all these different propositions alike, and as traditions only of different opinions.

After having said, what has been here said, concerning the advantage which, I apprehend, divines give to atheists by the absurd manner in which they employ tradition, I will observe another advantage, which the atheist may take, from some abstract reasonings that they employ to support this tradition. The theist is modest. He is content to know what God has done, and he acknowledges it, for that very reason, wise and good, right and fit to be done. But the divine is not so modest. It is not enough for him to know, that God made the world, and to fix the time

when it was made, he presumes, with much theological ostentation, to explain the motives that determined the Supreme Being to create the world and the inhabitants of it, men at least. The atheist objects that these motives must have been eternal, since the divine attributes, from which they are deduced, are certainly eternal, in the system of the divine; and that it is impossible, therefore, to conceive that the Supreme Being should neglect doing, during an eternity, what it was conformable to his wisdom and goodness, and suitable to his power, from all eternity to do. The divine may say, and he will say, no doubt, that whenever God, who is himself eternal, had created the world, an eternity must have preceded this creation, and that the objection, the atheist makes, would be just as strong, if he assumed that the world began six millions of years sooner, as it is when he places the æra of it according to the Jewish and Christian chronology. He will employ the same sort of reasoning, in this case, against the atheist, which the atheist employed against him in another; that is, in the case of the commencement of arts and sciences; he will put the atheist on proving, that it implies contradiction to believe God eternal, and not to believe the eternity of the world. To this, it may be, the atheist would reply, that the contradiction in believing one and not believing the other arises, like a self-evident truth, from what the divine himself affirms, and that the evidence is too great

to need any demonstration, and therefore incapable of any, like many other truths of which we have an immediate intuitive perception. From hence the atheist would insist that all the motives, which the divine asserts a Supreme Being had to create the world in time, are unanswerable reasons to prove it eternal; arguments for his system, in part at least, and, as far as the eternity of the world is concerned, in the whole.

A theist, who stood by, might, perhaps, suggest to the divine an expedient whereby to get out of the difficulty, wherein he has involved himself by presuming to specify the motives which the Supreme Being had to create the world in time. The theist would advise him, like a good ally, (for such he is sometimes to the divine, though he is never such to the atheist, as the divine is on some occasions) he would advise, I say, the divine to keep a little more precision in the use of words. Sometimes the world stands for the whole universe, and sometimes for our planet only. The divine must understand it, as Moses does, and believe by consequence that the whole universe began to exist, when Moses tells him, that the sun, our earth, the other planets, in short our solar system, began to exist: for the legislator of the Jews included no other in his idea of the universe. He would advise the divine, therefore, to distinguish better between the universe and the world; to affirm that our planet, or, at most, our solar system, began in time,

which is the utmost that Moses can be understood to have meaned, and to affirm nothing of the universe, of which Moses knew nothing, and he only knows that it is. Thus the reasons he gives, why God created the world, we inhabit, no sooner, may be a little better supported than they can be on the supposition that he created nothing before it, and was the eternal cause of no such effects, as his physical attributes enabled, and his moral attributes required him to produce. The theist might add, that, though we should suppose the universe to be eternal, like its Author, the eternal effect of an eternal cause, nothing will hinder us from assuming at the same time, on the faith of tradition, as he does, or, on this and other foundations, as the divine does, that our world, and even our solar system began in time. A constant rotation from existence to nonexistence or from generation to dissolution, and so back again, maintains our world and the inhabitants of it in being. Why should not such a rotation of worlds and systems of worlds maintain the universe in being?

But it is time to consider the historical, as we have considered the traditional proofs, which the archbishop brings of the beginning of the world. I will quote his own words, as they stand in Barbeyrac's translation; for if I did not quote them, you would hardly believe that I make him say no more than he did say. He says then, "We have "likewise a history of the commencement of the "world,

" world, the most ancient and the most credible " that could be desired. This history is that of " Moses, an author so ancient, that no other can " stand in competition with him in this respect. " I might add, that this writer has all the cha- " racters of a divine authority, and prove it by " such good reasons, as would give a great weight " to his testimony in the minds of all those who " believe a God. But such arguments are not " proper to be employed against the atheist with " whom we dispute at present. I ask no more, " than that the same credit may be given to " Moses, as we give to every other historian. " Now this cannot be refused him reasonably, " since he is quoted by the most ancient heathen " historians, and since the antiquity of his writ- " ings has never been contested by any of them, " as Josephus maintains."

This is my text. I shall make some few remarks upon it, and this general remark in the first place. It has been said, truly enough, that the court of Rome has established many maxims and claims of right, by affirming them constantly and boldly against evident existing proofs of the contrary. The Jewish and the christian church have proceeded by the same rule of policy, and the authority of the Pentateuch, to say nothing here of the other books of the Old Testament, has been established entirely and solely on the affirmation of the Jews, or, at best, on seeming and equivocal proofs, such as Josephus brings against such

evident marks of falshood as can be objected to no other writings, except to professed romances, nor even always to them.

It was the pride of the Jews to believe themselves, and to make others believe if they could, not only that their nation was the elect people of God, but that it was of an immense antiquity, and that they possessed the most ancient of all authentic records. Josephus (who had as much of this pride about him as any Jew or Pharisee of them all, and who stuck, as little, at any absurdity, as any ancient or modern rabbin) endeavoured to promote these opinions among the Greeks and the Romans by his writings, though with very little success. Tillotson, like other christian doctors, had a better motive than that of mere ambition, though it was not quite foreign from ambition neither, to support the authority of the Pentateuch. Whether Jesus Christ, or St. Paul, abolished the ceremonial law of Moses, or whether the former grafted on this law, as the latter thought fit to graft on his Gospel, let us leave it to divines to decide. In all cases christianity was founded on Judaism, and the New Testament supposes the truth of the Old. Our divines, therefore, are obliged to support the Old, as well as they can, in order to support the New. The authority of these books is maintained, in some countries, by inquisitors and hangmen. In a country like ours, where arguments alone can be employed, divines may be indulged in the use of all the good and the bad indifferently, that they may

may give up nothing; for where every part may be alike attacked, every part may be alike defended. Two cautions, however, these reverend persons would do well to observe. One to insist chiefly on the external proofs of the divine authenticity of the Scriptures, and to pour forth, on that head, all their stock of Hebrew, Syriac, Greek, and Latin, but to dwell very little on the internal marks of a divine character. They might silence those perhaps, on the first kind of proof, by their translations and commentaries, whom they will never convince, on the second, by fair reasoning; and might avoid a great deal of that blasphemy, which they talk on both; a circumstance, surely, that deserves some regard from them. Another caution is this, that they should make war rather defensively than offensively, that they should take the only true advantage of the discretion of their adversaries, which would be to return it with discretion; for their adversaries seldom speak out, nor push the instances and arguments they bring, as far as they might be carried. Instead of which these orthodox bullies affect to triumph over men, who employ but a part of their strength; tire them with impertinent paradoxes; and provoke them by unjust reflections, and, often, by the foulest language.

After this long, and, I hope, charitable remark, it is time to consider how Tillotson proves that we have historical, as well as traditional, evidence of the beginning of the world. This evidence is that of Moses: and to give it the more weight, he in-

sists on the great antiquity of the historian. This antiquity will not be disputed, perhaps, and it will be allowed, that no other history of the same assumed antiquity has come down to us. But then it will be asked, what materials Moses could have before him when he writ the book of Genesis, which is in some sort a preface to the Pentateuch, or, at least, the first chapters of it, wherein he relates most circumstantially the creation of the world, and the whole progress of that great event? Divines have their answer ready. Moses was not a contemporary author, but he might write upon contemporary authority. Twenty-five centuries passed indeed between the creation and him, but his materials were, notwithstanding that, extremely fresh and authentic, since they must have gone through very few hands, in ages when men lived so long, to come into his, whether we suppose them written or unwritten. This may be said, it has been often said, and always very weakly, to the purpose that is mentioned here; for if Moses had taken his materials from the mouth of Adam himself, they would not have been sufficient vouchers of all that he relates. Adam might have related to him the passages of the sixth day, something even of his own creation, at least from the moment that God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life: but Adam could have told him nothing that preceded this, even on the sixth day, nor, by consequence, on the other five, wherein the whole material world was created. Moses therefore, notwithstanding his antiquity, may

may afford an instance in proof of the universality of the tradition, but no more. His writings afford no historical evidence.

Our archbishop assures us, that he could have added to the antiquity of this historian certain characters of a divine authority, and have supported them by reasons which would give great weight to his testimony in the minds of all those who acknowledge the existence of God. It is pity he did not think fit to give these characters and reasons; since however improper it might have been to urge them against an atheist, who denies the existence of God, as well as the commencement of the world, they would certainly have been urged very properly against a theist, who, acknowledging both, believes nothing of the divine character of Moses. But he was too much attached to a rigorous precision, and used too much candour in his reasoning, to mingle the atheist and the theist together in this dispute. All he desires is, what, he thinks, cannot be reasonably refused him, that we give the same credit to Moses, as we should give to any other historian. We will consider then, in the last place, what characters of a divine authority may be found in the writings of Moses, and, from this consideration, we shall find reason, perhaps, to be the less concerned that we have not those which Tillotson kept to himself on this occasion. In the mean time, let us continue to judge of Moses, as we should do of any other historian, since it is all that is desired of us.

Now

Now to constitute the authenticity of any history, these are some of the conditions necessary. It must be writ by a contemporary author, or by one who had contemporary materials in his hands. It must have been published among men who were able to judge of the capacity of the author, and of the authenticity of the memorials on which he writ. Nothing repugnant to the universal experience of mankind must be contained in it. The principal facts, at least, which it contains, must be confirmed by collateral testimony, that is, by the testimony of those who had no common interest of country, of religion, or of profession, to disguise or falsify the truth. That Moses was not a contemporary author is allowed, and that he could have no contemporary authority, for the greatest part of what he advanced concerning the creation, is proved. Thus far then his writings have no historical authenticity. Let us see whether they have it in any of the other respects which I have mentioned. Were they published among people able to judge of them and of their author? Huetius, who writ an evangelical demonstration, and died a sceptic, admits, in his demonstration, that a book, to be deemed authentic, must have been received, as such, in the age which followed immediately the publication of it, and in all the ages which followed this. Has it been sufficiently proved, that the Mosaical history was so received? I believe not. There was, it is said, by Abbadie, I think, a law of Moses, before Esdras, before Josiah, and even before

before David, since this famous prophet and king speaks continually of the law of God, and since all the other prophets quote the most important passages of Deuteronomy. The Pentateuch too must have been in their hands, since they show, very clearly, that they had an exact knowledge of the facts contained in Genesis, the least circumstances of which are referred to by them as circumstances that no man could be ignorant of. If Moses writ the history contained in the book of Genesis, he writ all the other books that compose the Pentateuch. Abbadie assumes that this cannot be denied, and that Moses must needs have been a good scribe, since it was he who recorded, in writing, the words of the covenant made at Horeb.

It would be hard to find an example of greater trifling: for when we have allowed that the authors of the Old Testament, from David down to Esdras, speak not only of the law, but refer to many of the facts related in the Pentateuch, it will not follow necessarily that the Pentateuch, which we have in our hands, was published in the time of Moses or immediately after it. Much of the history, and some of the law, perhaps, contained in the writings ascribed to Moses, came down to those who quote them, by traditions of uncertain original, though they were all alike ascribed, by the Jews, to the same legislator. This cannot appear improbable to any one who considers, that establishments said to be made according to the law of Moses, when the custom

of

of reading this law once in seven years to the people was neglected, and when they had actually no body of law extant among them, are mentioned sometimes in the Bible. This had been the case when Hilkiah found the law in the temple, which had been lost long before, and continued to be so, during the first eighteen or twenty years of good Josiah's reign. That the book, thus found, contained nothing but the law of Moses, strictly so called, or than the recapitulation of it, made in Deuteronomy, not the Mosaical history, we may, nay we must conclude, from the little time that the reading the book in the presence of the king, and before it was sent by his order to the prophetess Huldah, took up.

The Jews had an oral, as well as a written law, and the former has been deemed even more important than the latter. The former however consisted of nothing more than traditions, which the rabbin Juda Hakkodosh, or the holy, compiled, six or seven centuries after Esdras had compiled the canon of the Scriptures. In short, there seems to have been two collections of ancient Jewish traditions made at different times; and the authors, who preceded Esdras, might quote those of one sort, as authentic facts and divine laws, just as well as the doctors, who preceded rabbi Juda, quoted those of the other, as a commentary on them given by God himself on mount Sinai. It will be said, I know, that the authenticity of the Pentateuch, given us by Esdras, is sufficiently proved, by the conformity it has,

has, in most instances, with the Pentateuch of the Samaritans, that is of the Cuthæans, a people sent from the other side of the Euphrates by Salmanasar to inhabit the country of Samaria, which he had depopulated. This people knew nothing of the Mosaical law till Asarhaddon, the successor of Salmanasar, sent a priest of the Jews to instruct them in it, who might carry, for aught we know, a Pentateuch written in ancient Hebrew characters with him. I enter into no examination of these precarious accounts, lest I should go out of my depth; neither need I to do so: for if we allow that the Pentateuch was public before the time of Esdras, Josiah, or even David, will it follow that it was so as early as would be necessary to answer that condition of authenticity, which we speak of here? Was there not time more than enough between Moses and David to make fabulous traditions pass for authentic history? Did it take up near so much to establish the divine authority of the Alcoran among the Arabs; a people not more incapable to judge of Mahomet and his book, than we may suppose the Israelites to judge of Moses and his book, if he left any, whether of law alone, or of history and law both?

The time that the Israelites passed from the Exode under Moses, and the four centuries that they passed afterward under their judges, may be compared, well enough, to the heroical age of the Greeks. Marvellous traditions descended from both, and their heroes were much alike. Those

Those of the Greeks were generally bastards of some god or other, and those of the Jews were always appointed by God to defend his people, and to destroy their enemies. But Aod, one of these, was an assassin, and Jephtha, another, was a captain of banditti, as David was, till, by the help of the priests, he obtained the crown; after which, under him, and his son Solomon, the government of the Israelites took a better form; arts and sciences were cultivated; and their historical age might begin. It has been urged, by those who scruple little what they say, that the four centuries, which the Israelites passed under their judges, were times of adversity and oppression, wherein they had something else to do than to invent fabulous traditions, or that if any such were invented so near the times of Moses and Joshua, they must have been detected by the Israelites themselves, who would have been far from encouraging traditions so injurious to neighbouring nations, of whom they had reason to stand in awe. Thus it seems that times of ignorance, barbarity, and confusion, were the most unlikely to give rise and currency to fables, and the most proper to preserve the truth of traditions, which must, for this ridiculous reason, have come down uncorrupted and unmixed. One can hardly imagine any thing so extravagant, and yet I can quote, from Abbadie, a way of reasoning that is more so. You have thought, I doubt not, hitherto, like other men of sense, that the consistency of a narration is one mark of it's truth; but

but this great divine will teach you, that the inconsistency, not the consistency, is such a mark. Moses, he says, is so inconsistent with himself, that he establishes the existence of one God, and then talks as if there were many. He introduces Jacob wrestling against God, and the mortal comes off victorious. Could he have advanced such an apparent absurdity, if the fact had not been true? He advanced it, because he knew it to be true, though he did not understand it. Just so he talked of several lords, who appeared to Abraham under the forms of angels, without knowing what he said, though Abbadie knew that the angel of the covenant was one of them: by which I profess myself not to know what Abbadie meaned, or what they mean, who say, that this angel was the son of God. Thus a new rule is added to the canon of criticism by this learned divine.

Another condition of the authenticity of any human history, and such alone we are to consider in this place, is, that it contain nothing repugnant to the experience of mankind. Things repugnant to this experience are to be found in many, that pass however for authentic; in that of Livy, for instance: but then these incredible anecdotes stand by themselves, as it were, and the history may go on without them. But this is not the case of the Pentateuch, nor of the other books of the Old Testament. Incredible anecdotes are not mentioned seldom and occasionally in them. The whole history is

founded on such, it consists of little else, and if it were not a history of them, it would be a history of nothing. These books become familiar to us before we have any experience of our own. The strange stories they relate, represented in pictures or in prints, are the amusements of our infancy; we read them, as soon as we learn to read, and they make their impressions on us, like the tales of our nurses. The latter are soon effaced, though sometimes, with difficulty; because no one takes care to preserve them, and care is taken, in a good education, to destroy them. But the others are industriously renewed, and the most superstitious credulity grows up along with us. We may laugh at Don Quixote, as long as we please, for reading romances till he believed them to be true histories, and for quoting archbishop Turpin with great solemnity; but when we speak of the Pentateuch, as of an authentic history, and quote Moses, as solemnly as he did Turpin, are we much less mad than he was? When I sit down to read this history with the same indifference as I should read any other, for so it ought to be read, to comply with all that archbishop Tillotson requires of us, I am ready to think myself transported into a sort of fairy-land, where every thing is done by magic and enchantment; where a system of nature, very different from ours, prevails; and all I meet with is repugnant to my experience, and to the clearest and most distinct ideas I have. Two or three incredible anecdotes, in a decade of Livy, are easily passed over;

over; I reject them, and I return, with my author, into the known course of human affairs, where I find many things extraordinary, but none incredible. I cannot do this in reading the history of the Old Testament. It is founded in incredibility. Almost every event contained in it is incredible in it's causes or consequences, and I must accept or reject the whole, as I said just now. I can do no otherwise, if I act like an indifferent judge, and if I give no more credit to Moses than to any other historian. But I need say no more on this head. No one, except here and there a divine, will presume to say, that the histories of the Old Testament are conformable to the experience of mankind and to the natural course of things. I except here and there a divine, because I remember one, who speaking of the conversation of the serpent with the first woman, and the other circumstances of the fall of man, (that he may avoid the explanations given by the rabbins of this story, or that of Philo, a little less extravagant than the others, all which turned the whole into allegory) has the front to assert, that there is nothing incredible in this relation literally understood.

The next condition of historical authenticity is this, that the facts, the principal facts at least, be confirmed by collateral testimony. By collateral testimony I mean the testimony of those, who had no common interest of country, of religion, or of profession, to disguise or falsify the truth, as I expressed myself above. Thus too it is necessary

that we express ourselves in order to prevent a common theological sophism. Huetius says, in the place to which I have referred already, that a history is deemed to be true, when other histories relate the same facts, and in the same manner. But it is not enough that the same facts are related, even in contemporary, or nearly contemporary books; since if the authors of these books were such as I describe, all these testimonies would be in effect but one, as all those of the Old Testament, which confirm the Mosaical history, are in truth but one, the testimony of Moses himself.

Josephus attempts to support this history by collateral testimonies, those of Egyptians, Phœnicians, Chaldæans, and even Greeks. But these testimonies, were they never so full to his purpose, would cease to be collateral testimonies, by coming through him who had a common interest of country and religion to disguise and to falsify truth. If we examine the use he makes of the fragments he cites from Manetho, concerning the shepherd-kings, and many other citations in his works, we shall find abundant reason to suspect him of both. Eusebius is a collateral witness as little as he, and yet from these two quivers principally have all the arrows employed to defend the authenticity of the Old Testament been drawn. They are blunt indeed, and nothing can be more trifling than the use that has been made of them by ancient and modern scholars. Whenever these men find, in profane history or tradition, the least

circumstance

circumstance that has any seeming relation to sacred history, they produce it as collateral testimony, and sometimes even the similitude of sounds is employed for the same purpose, with a great apparatus of learning. But nothing can be more impertinent than this learning. The man who gives the least credit to the Mosaic history for instance, will agree, very readily, that these five books contain traditions of a very great antiquity, some of which were preserved and propagated by other nations, as well as by the Israelites, and by other historians, as well as by Moses. Many of them may be true too; but, I think, they will not serve to vouch for one another in the manner they must do to become such collateral testimonies as are required. That the Israelites had a leader and legislator called Moses, is proved by the consent of foreign, whom I call collateral, witnesses. Be it so. But surely it will not follow, that this man conversed with the Supreme Being face to face, which these collateral witnesses do not affirm. The Israelites were an Egyptian colony and conquered Palestine. Be it so. It will not follow, that the Red sea opened a passage to them, and drowned the Egyptians who pursued them. It will not follow, that the possession of the land of Canaan was promised to their father Abraham four hundred years before, as a consequence of the vocation of this patriarch, and of an alliance which God made with him and with his family. A great number of instances might be brought of the same kind; and

such instances might serve to prove the authenticity of those histories, which the monk of Viterbo endeavoured to impose on the world under the names of Megasthenes and other ancient writers, just as well as they serve to prove the authenticity of those which we ascribe to Moses, or Joshua, or any other supposed writers of the Old Testament.

The three or four ancient neighbouring nations, of whom we have some knowledge, seemed to have had a common fund of traditions, which they varied according to their different systems of religion, philosophy, and policy. We may observe this, if we compare the traditions of the Arabs, descended from the Ismaelites, with those of the Jews, descended from the Israelites. Human tradition for human tradition, the former deserve as much credit as the latter. Why then do we put so great a difference between them? Have we any reason for it, except the affirmation of one of the parties? Abbadie will tell you that we have, because the Jews were a people of sages and philosophers. The best excuse, that can be made for the poor man, is to say, that he became, soon afterwards, mad enough to study the Apocalypse, and to believe that he found a hidden sense in it. The truth is, that ignorance and superstition, pride, injustice, and barbarity were the peculiar characteristics of this people of sages and philosophers. The principles of their religion formed them to every part of this character. Their priests, who had the care of their religion

and

and the keeping of their records, as we are told, maintained them in it; and whether their history was such, as we see it, before the days of Esdras and Nehemias, or nothing more than broken traditions, collected and put together by them in the present form, thus much is certain, that the same spirit breathes through the whole, and that the character of the nation appears evidently in every part of the composition. It has been said, I know, of the pride of this people particularly, that their scriptures were not contrived to flatter them in it, since their revolts, their apostacies, and the punishments which followed them, as well as the discourses of their prophets, filled with the most mortifying reproaches, and the most terrible threatenings on the part of God, are set forth in these books with every aggravating circumstance. But this evasion will strengthen, instead of weakening, what I have said. It is true that the Jews are often represented in them like rebellious children, but they are always represented like favourite children. They abandon God's law and his worship; they depose him; they choose another king in his place: still his predilection for this chosen people subsists, and if he punishes, it is only, like an indulgent parent, to reclaim them, and to show them the same favour as before. In short, he renews all his promises to them; future glory and triumph; a Messiah; a kingdom that shall destroy all others, and last eternally, "consumet universa regna, et ipsum stabit in æternum." Thus was the pride of this people kept

up by incredible stories about the past, and incredible prophecies about the future; and with their pride, even to this day, their ignorance, their enthusiastical superstition, and in principle, if not in effect for want of power, their injustice and their barbarity. Thus we see that the authenticity of the Mosaical history and the other histories of the Old Testament has no sufficient collateral testimony, but rests, solely, or principally, on the good faith of a people who deserve, on many accounts, to be trusted the least; and of whom we may say, that it is improbable their history should have been written, and impossible that it should have been preserved, with a strict regard to truth.

I might rest the matter here, if it did not come into my thoughts to expose a sophism, that has been employed by those who defend the authenticity of this history. If they cannot show, that it is confirmed by collateral and foreign testimony, contemporary or nearly contemporary, they hope to confirm it by assuming, that relics continued long among the Jews, and that festivals and ceremonious institutions continue still, all which are so many contemporary proofs; since they must have been contemporary, in their origin, with the facts to which they are relative. The proof is precarious in the mouth of one of your divines, who have abused it to establish so many pious frauds, and the belief of so many foolish legends; but it becomes contemptible, when it is employed by one of our divines, who declaim so much against the use that has been made of it in your church.

With

With what face can he talk to us, like Abbadie, of the rod of Aaron, of the pot of manna, or of the figures that represented rats and the privy parts of the Philistines? Would the man prove his sincerity to us, as he proves that of Moses, by his contradictions and inconsistencies?

The relics, so long preserved, exist no where out of the books whose historical authenticity they are advanced to prove; and if they did exist, we should be obliged to reject them, or to admit many of the grossest impositions that have passed on popular credulity. Did not the priests of Delphi show the very stone that Saturn swallowed, when he intended to devour Jupiter? Was there not an olive tree at Troezena, or somewhere in Greece, in the time of Pausanias, which blossomed and bore fruit, which had been the club of Hercules, and which this hero had planted, just as Joseph of Arimathæa planted his stick, that became a miraculous thorn at Glastonbury?—The institution of festivals and ceremonies proves as little as relics. Though supposed contemporary, they may owe their original to some fabulous traditions; or if really contemporary, they serve as well to prove all the ridiculous circumstances, that have been blended with the tradition in process of time, as the fact which they were designed to record. The Israelites had their sabbath of days, their sabbath of years, and their weeks of years. Will it follow that God was employed six days in the laborious work of the creation, and that he rested the seventh? The passover and other in-

stitutions served to commemorate the departure of the Israelites out of Egypt, and their transmigration into Palestine. But will they serve likewise to commemorate all the incredible circumstances, which had been added to the tradition of a very credible, and, no doubt, of a very true event? Collateral testimony proves the event; but these supposed contemporary institutions cannot stand in lieu of collateral testimony to prove the circumstances. Whether the event be true, or whether it be false, such institutions will confound the truth of the event with the falsehood of the circumstances in one case, and will vouch for both alike in the other. The death of Moses, who certainly died, is confounded with the circumstances that accompany it in the last chapter of Deuteronomy; circumstances absurd and profane; and yet, if the Jews commemorate the true fact, they must commemorate, on this principle, all the circumstances that are related in the Bible, and in their oral traditions. A good iman believes piously the ascension of Mahomet, on the faith of his traditions, and of the ceremony, by which it is annually commemorated. The ascension and the circumstances of it are false alike, the ceremony vouches for all alike; and he must believe, not only the ascension of Mahomet, but that the angel Gabriel brought by night to his sepulchre a flying horse, called Borak, which the prophet mounted and rode on horseback into Heaven. Shall the annual ceremony, which confirms the whole account alike, make us believe,

that

that Mahomet went to Heaven, or hinder us from placing this story in the same class with that of Astolphus and his hippogryph? We shall believe no part of it; but the good man is obliged to believe the whole.

The little I have said makes it plain enough, and more particulars in so plain a case would be superfluous, that if we take Tillotson at his word, if we give only the same credit to Moses, which we give to every other historian, and no more, his history cannot pass, according to any rule of good sense or true criticism, for authentic. But other divines are not so generous; they give up nothing; and, therefore, when they cannot maintain weak arguments of one kind, they have recourse to another hypothesis, and affirm this history to have been writ by men under the immediate influence of divine inspiration, and to be, therefore, of divine authority. For this they have the word of Josephus, and the unanimous attestation of the Jewish and Christian churches. But all this will not amount to proof, unless it may be said, that they who cannot give to this history even the appearance of human, can give it the appearance of divine authenticity. That sameness of spirit, which runs through all this history, and which appears in all the writings of the Jewish prophets, confirms one thing that Josephus says. A distinct order of men, priests and prophets, among the Jews, as well as the Egyptians, published the sacred writings of these people, and these writings were received on the faith of this

order

the Jewish revelation. We find this asserted very magisterially, but, if we have recourse to the Bible, we find no such thing. Moses did not believe the immortality of the soul, nor the rewards and punishments of another life; though it is possible he might have learned these doctrines from the Egyptians, who taught them very early, and yet not so early, perhaps, as they taught that of the unity of God. When I say that Moses did not believe the immortality of the soul, nor future rewards and punishments, my reason for it is, that he taught neither, when he had to do with a people, whom even a theocracy could not restrain, and on whom, therefore, terrours of punishments future as well as present, eternal as well as temporary, could never be too much multiplied, nor too strongly inculcated. Moses, the greatest of their prophets, knew nothing of this immortality, and Solomon, the wisest of their kings, decides against it. The texts in Ezekiel, and others, which are alleged to prove that this doctrine was part of the Jewish system, are too modern to prove it, and they admit besides of a different sense. In short, this doctrine does not appear to have prevailed among them, till they became acquainted with Greek philosophy, and, instead of lending to Plato, borrowed from him. This pretended mark of divinity may be ascribed therefore, if it be one, to pagan philosophy, but it cannot be so to Jewish theology; and I cannot help using an expression of

of one of these declaimers *, who write as if they were preaching, and to apply it to the whole tribe: They would do well to think a little better beforehand, and to respect their readers a little more.

When these men talk of the characters of a divine original, which are to be found in the books of the Old Testament, they must mean nothing, or they must mean to say, that these books are more perfect, according to our ideas of human perfection, whether we consider them as books of law or of history, than any other writings that are avowedly human. Now if this be what they mean, nothing can be more false. They cannot deny, that pagan philosophers enjoined a general benevolence, a benevolence not confined to any particular society of men, but extended to the great commonwealth of mankind, as a first principle of the law of our nature. The law of the Jews exacted from them all the duties necessary to maintain peace and good order among themselves, and if this be a mark of divinity, the laws, which rapparees and banditti establish in their societies, have the same. But the first principles, and the whole tenour of the Jewish laws, took them out of all moral obligations to the rest of mankind; and if Moses did not order them to have no benevolence for any, who were not Jews, "erga nullum hominem benevolos esse," as Lysimachus pretended, yet it is certain, that their law, their history, and their prophecies, determined them to think themselves a chosen race,

* Abbadie.

distinct

distinct from the rest of mankind in the order of God's providence, and that they were far from owing to other men, what other men owed to them and to one another. This produced a legal injustice and cruelty in their whole conduct, and there is no part of their history wherein we shall not find examples of both, authorised by their law, and pressed upon them by their priests and their prophets.

In the systems of pagan philosophy we are exhorted, says another of these declaimers, to love virtue for her own sake; but the Jewish divines, rising much higher, exhorted us to love virtue for the sake of God. But can there be any thing so impiously interesting and craving, as the sentiments ascribed to the patriarchs by Moses, and the principles of his own law? "If "God will be with me, and will keep me in this "way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, "and raiment to put on, so that I come again "to my father's house in peace, then shall the "Lord be my God, and this stone which I have "set for a pillar shall be God's house, and of all "that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the "tenth unto thee*." This was Jacob's vow, and the conditional engagement which he took with God. If we turn to the xxviiith chapter of Deuteronomy, we shall find that Moses, on the renewal of the covenant between God and the people, employs no arguments, to induce the latter to a strict observation of it, of a higher nature

* Gen. vi, 28.

than

than promises of immediate good, and the threatenings of immediate evil. They are exhorted to keep the law; not for the sake of the law, not for the sake of God, but for considerations of another kind, and wherein not only their wants were to be supplied, but all their appetites and passions to be gratified. If they hearkened diligently to the voice of the Lord, they were to be set on high above all the nations of the Earth; they were to be the head, and not the tail; to be above only, and not beneath; all the people of the Earth were to fear them; all their enemies were to be smitten before their face, and they who came out against them one way, were to fly before them seven. These were objects of ambition. Their basket and their store were to be blessed, they were to grow rich, they were to lend to many nations, and to borrow from none. These were objects of avarice. They were to be blessed every where, in the city and in the field, in the fruit of their bodies, in the fruit of their ground, and in the fruit of their cattle, and of their flocks of sheep. These were objects of all their other appetites and passions. God purchased, as it were, the obedience of a people, he had chosen long before, by this mercenary bargain. It was ill-kept on their part; and the law, with all these sanctions, was continually violated, sometimes rejected, and had in no degree a force sufficient to maintain itself in observation and reverence.

The most excellent constitutions of human government

vernment and systems of human law become often useless, and even hurtful, either in a natural course of things, or by extraordinary conjunctures, which the wisdom of legislators could not foresee. One of the most conceivable perfections of a law is, that it be made with such a foresight of all possible accidents, and with such provisions for the due execution of it, in all cases, that the law may be effectual to govern and direct these accidents, instead of lying at the mercy of them. Such a law would produce it's effect, by a certain moral necessity resulting from itself, and not by the help of any particular conjuncture. We are able to form some general notions of laws thus perfect; but to make them is above humanity. Another of the most conceivable perfections of a law consists in the clearness and precision of it's terms, and, even in this, the greatest legislators have often failed. The terms become equivocal or obscure, if they were not so originally, by the endeavours of those who fear the law, to elude it, and of those who get by their explanations or judgments, to perplex the meaning of it. But that which is ideal perfection, not real, among men, will be found, no doubt, and ought to be expected, when God is the legislator. If it is not so found, all that can be said about marks of divinity in any law, that pretends to be revealed and enacted by God, is mere cant.

To apply these reflections the more strongly, it will be proper to consider the law of Moses, relatively

relatively to the first of the perfections mentioned, as a law given to the Israelites alone; and to consider, relatively to the second, the whole body of their law, and their history, which is a sort of commentary on their law, not only as given to them, but as given to all mankind, for purposes the most important to their common welfare. If Eternal Wisdom dictated the laws, and inspired these historians and prophets in all their writings, Eeternal Wisdom knew all the uses they were to serve in time; and by consequence, whether we regard the Jewish œconomy alone, or that of Judaism and Christianity together, the whole system of law, history, and prophecy, must be exactly proportioned, as the means of all these ends.

On the first head we cannot read the Bible without being convinced, that no law ever operated so weak and so uncertain an effect, as the law of Moses did. Far from prevailing against accidents and conjunctures, the least was sufficient to interrupt the course, and to defeat the designs of it; to make that people not only neglect the law, but cease to acknowledge the legislator. To prevent this, was the first of these designs; and if the second was, as it was no doubt, and as it is the design or pretence of all laws, to secure the happiness of the people, this design was defeated as fully as the other; for the whole history of this people is one continued series of infractions of the law and of national calamities. So that this law, considered as the particular law of this nation, has proved more ineffectual than any other

law, perhaps, that can be quoted. If this be ascribed to the hardness of heart and obstinacy of the people, in order to save the honour of the law, this honour will be little saved, and it's divinity ill maintained. This excuse might be admitted in the case of any human law; but we speak here of a law supposed to be dictated by Divine Wisdom, which ought, and which would have been able, if it had been such, to keep in a state of submission to it, and of national prosperity, even a people rebellious and obstinate enough to break through any other. If it be said, that the law became ineffectual by the fault of those who governed the people, their judges and their kings, let it be remembered, that their judges and kings were of God's appointment, for the most part at least; that he himself is said to have been their king, during several ages; that his presence remained among them, even after they had deposed him; and that the high priest consulted him, on any emergency, by the Urim and Thummim. Occasional miracles were wrought to enforce the law, but this was a standing miracle that might serve both to explain and enforce it, by the wisdom and authority of the legislator, as often as immediate recourse to him was necessary. Can it be denied, that the most imperfect system of human laws would have been rendered effectual by such means as these?

It may not be amiss here to compare the effect of this law, before the captivity of Babylon, with that which it had afterwards.—Ten tribes of this chosen people had been, for their disobedience, dispersed,

dispersed, and, we may say, lost in the east, long before the reign of Nebuchodonosor. This prince completed the ruin of the whole nation. He burned their temple, and their city, and carried the two remaining tribes into captivity. This captivity is said to have lasted but seventy years, and the Jews had carried into it so little respect for their law, so little regard to their history, and so little trust in the prophecies, which had been published both before and during this time, that they seemed to have forgot them all when Cyrus gave them permission to return to their country, and to rebuild their temple. He did more than give them permission; he gave them encouragement, and, among other instances of it, he restored the sacred vessels, which had been taken from them. What happened on this great revolution? Zorobabel gathered, with much trouble, a small number of the Jews, who were willing to return into their own country on this great revolution, and even these were the dregs of the people. The most considerable of them, and, among these, twenty of the four and twenty orders of priests that had been carried to Babylon, chose rather to stay there than to return to the holy city, though that was the place appointed by God for their sacrifices, and the most august ceremonies of their religion. Fourscore years intervened between the return of Zorobabel and the arrival of Esdras at Jerusalem. The temple and the city, probably, had been rebuilt, but the law cannot be said to have been restored. Many

things, directly contrary to it, were practised openly and without scruple. Thus, for example, not only the people, but the Levites and the priests, married strange women, women who were not of their own country. Esdras, and Nehemias after him, neglected nothing to restore and preserve the observation of the law, and for this purpose they took means very different from those which Moses had instituted, and much more effectual. One of these means, and perhaps the most effectual, was the institution of synagogues, which became so numerous, that wherever there were ten Jews, it is said, there was a synagogue. In these the law was read and explained once every week; whereas it was to be read but once in seven years, and the people were obliged to go up to Jerusalem to hear it, according to the Mosaic institution. The consequence was, that notwithstanding some schisms, some apostacies, and other revolutions, which happened in the church and state, the Jews, in general, signalised themselves by a greater and more constant attachment to their religion and law.

Another perfection of law consists in the clearness and precision of the terms; and, in these respects, we propose to consider this body of history, of prophecy, and of law, relatively not to the Jews alone, but to the rest of the world likewise. Now the language in which this law was given, and in which we must suppose that the histories and prophecies were written, as well as the law, unless we suppose these to have been written

written in or after the time of Esdras, is, the learned say, of all languages the most loose and equivocal; and the style and manner of writing of the sacred authors, whoever they were, or whenever they lived, would increase the uncertainty and obscurity even of any other language. How should it be otherwise, when the same passages may be taken in historical, mystical, literal, and allegorical senses? and when those who writ them knew so little what they writ, that they foretold some future, when they imagined they were relating some past event? Lord Bacon, indeed, says, that the sacred authors had a special privilege of recording the future, as well as the past, in history. But I suppose his lordship to have been no more in earnest when he said this, than he was in writing his Christian paradoxes. To supply these defects, the Jews have recourse to an oral law, and Christians to the decisions of councils. Strange methods indeed! history may explain or control tradition, but it is quite absurd to explain or control history by tradition. Councils were composed of men, whose pretensions to inspiration deserve nothing but our contempt, and, therefore, it is equally absurd to explain or control the word of God by the judgment of these men, whether in their assemblies, or separately. St. Jerom complains, in one of his letters*, that they dragged the text to favour their particular sentiments, how repug-

* Ad Paul.

nant soever to it. But this text does not seem to want so much dragging. The ambiguity of it makes it supple enough, and sentiments, the most contrary to one another, are equally well supported by it. If we add to these considerations that of the infinite number of copies, of versions, and of versions of versions, which have given occasion to many alterations and interpolations, that are to be found, without going to Spinoza, to Hobbes, or to the fanciful author of the pre-adamitical system, we must be, I think, convinced, that the Bible, which we call the word of God, is as little fit, by the manner in which it has been preserved, to be a uniform foundation of universal religion, as by the manner in which it was writ and first published to the world.

Divines have their answer ready, and I hear, methinks, a great bishop of your church ask me, with that air of superiority, to which no man of his age had a better claim, whether the authenticity of these books diminishes, because some explanatory additions may have been inserted, because some errours may have slipped by accident into the text, or because the mistakes of copyists have given occasion to various readings? Show me, says the right reverend person, if you can, any law, any doctrine, any ceremony, any miracle, or any prophecy that has been added! Are not all the writings of the profane authors, whom you deem authentic, come down to you in the same manner as those of the holy penmen? I reply, my objection and my complaint are, that the

the manner in which these books are writ, were published, and have been preserved, makes it impossible to do this. Could we do it, could we distinguish between what is original and what not, the objection would vanish, and the complaint cease. But both will remain in force till then; because of the vast difference there is between the importance of these and of all other writings. The laws of Plato, the odes of Horace, and the history of Livy, may have been corrupted without any ill consequence to those who read them. But the same cannot be said of the laws of Moses, of the psalms of David, and of the history of the Old Testament.

I have been long enough on the defensive. It is time I should attack in my turn, and show you for what reasons I cannot believe, that the Pentateuch, and the other books of the Old Testament, were writ under a divine influence, and have any right to be called the word of God. There may be some defects in human laws, some falsities or mistakes in human histories, and yet both of them may deserve all the respect and all the credit, on the whole, that the writings of fallible men can deserve. But any other defect, any other falsity, or mistake, is sufficient to show the fraud and imposture of writings, that pretend to contain the infallible word of God. Now there are gross defects, and palpable falsehoods, in almost every page of the Scriptures, and the whole tenour of them is such, as no man, who acknowledges a supreme all-perfect Being, can believe

it to be his word. This I must prove; and when I have done so, divines may call me theist, or atheist, if they please. I shall not be ashamed of the first character, and shall leave them to purge themselves of one as absurd as the last.—That the Jews held the unity of God is true, and that their father Abraham might have learned this doctrine among the Egyptians, though it has been said, very foolishly, that he acquired great wealth by instructing that people in philosophy and the other sciences, is true likewise; but it will not follow that he, or his posterity, adored the true God. There are many passages in Job, in Isaiah, in the Psalms, and in other parts of the Old Testament, which give most sublime ideas of the majesty of the Supreme Being, and which have been sounded, for that reason, very high. But it will not be hard to quote Mahometan, and even Pagan writers, who have spoke of him with as much nobleness of style, and with as much dignity, as any of these; while, on the other hand, it will be easy to quote many things, imputed to the Supreme Being by these, at least as unworthy of him, as any which the Mahometans, or even the most extravagant of the Pagans, invented. Sublime expressions, concerning the Deity, may serve to show, that the imaginations of those who used them were heated by the enthusiasm of poetry and devotion; they will not prove the writers to have been divinely inspired; and it will become nothing less than blasphemy to assert that they were so, when they impute, at the same time,

time, such things to the Divinity as would bring disgrace on humanity.

I know, for I can demonstrate by connecting the clearest and most distinct of my real ideas, that there is a God, a first intelligent Cause of all things, whose infinite wisdom and power appear evidently in his works, and to whom, therefore, I ascribe, most rationally, every other perfection, whether conceivable or not conceivable by me. A book is put into my hands, which is, I am told, and have been told from my youth, the word of this God, and wherein I shall find the whole scheme of things which he has established, and the whole œconomy of his providence. What I learned before by rote, I consider with more attention, and am far from finding in it the Supreme Being, whose existence and attributes I demonstrate. The scene opens, indeed, by the creation, and this creation is ascribed to one God; that of the material world, at least: for when this God proceeds to the creation of man, he calls on other Beings, we know not by the text how many, to cooperate with him, and to make man in his and their likeness. This seems to lay a foundation for polytheism, and I am startled at it, because it is inconsistent with that unity of the Godhead, which my reason shows me, and which the general tenour even of the Mosaic law and history asserts. The divine, on the contrary, triumphs in the passage; because he drags it, against reason and this revelation both, to signify the three coequal Persons in one Godhead, which no reason can comprehend, which

which no revelation affirms explicitly, and which has no foundation, except that of a theology much more modern than this.

The more I compare what Moses says of this God, and by a supposed inspiration from him, the more repugnant I find the whole to be demonstrated, and even to obvious truth. Nothing can better resemble modern rabinical traditions, than these ancient and Mosaical traditions: the same ignorance of nature, physical and moral, the same irreverent conceptions of the Supreme Being prevails in both. Moses, they say, was divinely inspired, and yet Moses was as ignorant of the true system of the universe, as any of the people of his age. I need not descend into particulars to show this ignorance. To evade the objection drawn from it, we are told that he conformed himself to that of the people. He did not write to instruct the Israelites in natural philosophy, but to imprint strongly on their minds a belief of one God, the Creator of all things. Was it necessary to that purpose that he should explain to them the Copernican system? No, most certainly. But it was not necessary to this purpose, neither, that he should give them an absurd account, since he thought fit to give them one, of the creation of our physical, and we may say, of our moral system. It was not necessary he should tell them, for instance, that light was created, and the distinction of night and day, of evening and morning, were made before the sun, the moon, and the stars, which were "set in the

"firmament

"firmament of Heaven to divide the day from the "night, and to be for signs and for seasons, and "for days and for years." It was not necessary that he should tell them, how this moral system was destroyed, by the wiles of a serpent, and by the eating of an apple, almost as soon as it began, against the intention, as well as the command, of the Creator. Besides, Moses must be considered as appointed and inspired by God, to write, not only for his own age, but for all future ages; for the most enlightened as well as for the most ignorant: in which case, that his history might answer all the designs of Eternal Wisdom, it should have been proportioned to the ignorance of the Israelites, as little able to understand one system of philosophy as another, without giving so much reason to people better informed, to believe him as ignorant as any uninspired person could be.

If the ignorance and the errours, which betray themselves very grossly in the writings ascribed to Moses, make it impossible to believe such an author divinely inspired, the confused, inconsistent, and unworthy notions of a Supreme Being, which appear in his writings, show very evidently, that the true God was unknown to him. He acknowledged but one God, and the people were forbid to worship any other. But then he puts this one God to as many and as unworthy uses, in the service of man, as the heathens put their many gods, of different orders, and he was, therefore, in this respect, more inconsistent than they were.

were. The God of Moses creates the world, makes man, and repents of it immediately, for a reason which he might have prevented by a little less indulgence to, what is called, free will. As soon as this indulgence had given an opportunity to the serpent to tempt Eve, and to Eve to tempt Adam, who should have known the nature of serpents better, since he had just given to all animals the names that were proper to them; in short, as soon as they had eat the forbidden apple, and were fallen, they heard the voice of God, who was walking in the garden in the cool of the day. He condemned them for their disobedience; he cursed the Earth, for their sakes, and the serpent above all other beasts. Their eyes were then opened, they knew that they were naked, and they made themselves aprons of fig-leaves, which served to cover their nudity, till God made them coats of skins, for that purpose, and then drove them out of Paradise. Thus death and sin entered into the world, and the crime of this unhappy pair was punished in their whole posterity. This strange story, so trifling and so serious, and wherein God is made a principal actor with the serpent and Adam and Eve, has given occasion to much silly pains that have been taken, both by Jews and Christians, to lessen the absurdity of it, if that were possible. Since it is impossible, some have attempted to explain the whole allegorically: and it may not seem improbable, that this allegory had been invented, among other Egyptian mysteries, to signify the introduction of physical and

and moral evil into the world, by the fault of man, and against the design of God. This however cannot be admitted by Christians; for if it was, what would become of that famous text whereon the doctrine of our redemption is founded? The whole therefore must be understood literally, and in that case the God who made the world and man, that is, the Supreme Being, is the same God who walks in the garden, to enjoy the cool of the evening, who tries this famous cause, and insults our first parents by irony and sarcasm.

Thus again, and to show in another instance what inconsistency, as well as absurdity, Moses imputed to his one God, let us observe, that he makes this God repent a second time that he had made man on the Earth, because "he also was "flesh, every imagination of his heart was evil, "and all flesh had corrupted his way." For this reason he resolved to drown the whole world, and every living creature in it, except one man, called Noah, his family, and as many birds, and beasts, and creeping things, as were necessary to replenish the Earth. This resolution taken, the God of Moses orders Noah to build an ark, or clumsy chest, in the fashion and in the proportions he prescribes very minutely. This done, he crowds all the living creatures, he intended to save, men, and birds, and beasts, and insects, into the ark; though great scholars pretend to show, by a fair calculation, that far from being crowded, there was ample room for them all in it.

it. As soon as they were in, God shut the door upon them, the deluge began, and had it's full effect. When it was over, and as soon as God smelled the sweet savour of a burnt-offering, on the altar Noah had erected, he repented again, and resolved not to curse the ground any more for man's sake, nor for a reason, which should have hindered him from doing it at all, though he had done it twice already. He established a covenant with Noah, with his sons, and with their posterity; and that he might remember this covenant, between him and the Earth, or every living creature upon the Earth, which he had promised to drown no more, he declares to them the institution of a rainbow, designed to put him in mind of his promise, whenever he should bring a cloud over the Earth.

Abraham descended from Noah by Sem, and God made a new covenant with him and his posterity. The Supreme Being condescended to be the tutelary God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and under this character he acted a part which a sensible heathen, not transported by presumptuous notions of his own importance, nor by the impudence of enthusiam, would have thought too mean and too low for any of his inferiour gods or dæmons. The whole history, from Noah to Abraham, and from Abraham to the Exode, is a series of tales that would appear fit to amuse children alone, if they were found in any other book, though they served two great purposes of pride and ambition among an ignorant and barba-

rous

rous people. They served to give Jacob the preference over a much better man, over his brother Esau. He acquired indeed this birthright, and the prior blessing of a doating father, by a most infamous fraud; but the fraud was sufficient, even in the eye of God, to give the descendants of the younger brother, the Israelites, an entire preference over the descendants of the elder brother, the Edomites, and to set the former in the place of his favourite people. The same tales served the ambition, as well as the pride of the former, who claimed on their authority, as the legitimate offspring of Abraham, a right to the land of Canaan, which God had given to Abraham, and to all the glorious promises, which he had made to that patriarch. The other nations of the Earth were plunged in idolatry; God left them in it; he neglected them, and thought it enough to preserve the knowledge of himself, and the purity of his worship, in Palestine: for which purpose he gave a particular law, as well as the country of the Canaanites, to the Israelites. If we consider his laws as means of preserving monotheism, and the purity of worship, in opposition to polytheism and superstition, we shall find that no means could be worse proportioned to this end. If we consider the manner in which this people was conducted, by God himself, out of Egypt into the promised land; how they acquired the possession of it, by his immediate assistance, and by the execution of his orders, signified to

their

their leaders; we shall find, that nothing can be conceived more unworthy of an all-perfect Being. In order to preserve the purity of his worship, he prescribes to them a multitude of rites and ceremonies, founded in the superstitions of Egypt, from which they were to be weaned, or in some analogy to them. He succeeded accordingly. They were never weaned entirely from all these superstitions, and the great merit of the law of Moses was teaching the people to adore one God, much as the idolatrous nations adored several. This may be called sanctifying pagan rites and ceremonies, in theological language; but it is profaning the pure worship of God, in the language of common sense.—In order to make good his grant to Abraham of the land of Canaan, he orders the posterity of this patriarch to conquer it, and to exterminate the inhabitants. Just so the leaders of Huns, of Goths, and Vandals, might, and did make good their promises with the people who followed them. Just so the Spaniards made good the decree of Alexander the Sixth, when they conquered America. Pizarro was not more cruel than Joshua, nor the Franciscan monk, who accompanied him in his expedition against Atahualpa, so cruel as Samuel, who spoke in the name of the Lord. The Franciscan monk excited the soldiers to kill the king of Peru in the heat of battle. The Jewish priest hewed the king of the Amalekites "to pieces "before the Lord," in cool blood, and Saul was deposed

deposed for the clemency he had showed, though he too had exercised cruelty enough to sate any human ferocity.

I am not ignorant of the arbitrary assumptions, and silly evasions, which are employed to soften and excuse such acts of cruelty, by ancient fathers, and modern commentators. You may remember, that we read together, not long ago, the answer which Cyril of Alexandria writ to the emperor Julian, after the death of this emperor. When we laid aside the Billingsgate, and the long recriminations, by which, if he could not defend Moses, he tried to revenge himself on Plato, we found little or nothing in it, that deserved attention, except for it's absurdity; for absurdity deserves some attention to warn us against it. The men who justify such cruelties, as I have mentioned, and many others, which might be cited from the Old Testament, upon any hypothesis whatever, must have very ill hearts as well as heads; and he, who imputes them to the Supreme Being, is worse than an atheist, though he pass for a saint.

It is very unnecessary, in writing to you, that I should dwell upon the stale theological artifices, that are employed to get over such objections as have been raised against the books of Moses, and the other books of the Old Testament. The most absurd things they contain are called, sometimes, types and figures, though they have no more relation to the things said to be

typified and signified by them, than to any thing that passes now in France. Others of the same kind are called allegories, and are explained, not by the book wherein they are found, but by some fanciful commentary on them. Sometimes the order of the allegory is inverted, and things, plain in themselves, are assumed to be allegories, in order to establish upon them such doctrines, as suit theological hypotheses; many examples of which may be found in the writings of St. Paul. But the great expedient they employ, after him likewise, is that of mystery; when things, that stand in flat contradiction to the divine attributes, and that can be neither disguised by allegory, nor softened by analogy, are urged against them. When a theist sees nothing repugnant to the wisdom and power, or any other attributes of a Supreme, All-perfect Being, in the works of God, and therefore thinks himself justified in rejecting the impiety of those who would impose on him, as the Word of God, a book which contains scarce any thing that is not so, the divine has recourse to exclamation. Restrain your profane temerity, he cries. The wisdom of God is not like the wisdom of man, nor the justice of God like the justice of man; and who art thou, O man! who presumest to sound the depths of either? There is something so impudent, as well as absurd in this proceeding, that common as it is, one can see no example of it without surprise; for what can any man mean, who insists that I

should receive these books, as the Word of God, on account of the evident marks of a divine original, which he pretends to show me in them; and then stops me in this examination, by assuming the very thing that is in question? There are many appearances, no doubt, in the physical and moral systems, which may pass for mysteries, because we cannot fully comprehend them; but there is nothing, in either of these, repugnant to any excellency which we ought to attribute to the Supreme Being. We confess our ignorance; but we do not therefore call in question the divine attributes, nor disbelieve these systems to be his work, nor the law of nature to be his law. Had we the same certainty that the Jewish Scriptures were his word, we might reason in the same manner about them. But we cannot believe them to be his word, though we know that the physical and moral systems are his work, while we find in them such repugnancies to the nature of an All-perfect Being; not mysteries, but absurdities; not things incomprehensible, but things that imply, manifestly, contradiction with his nature. They imply it so strongly, that if we believe in Moses and his God, we cannot believe in that God whom our reason shows us; nay, we must believe against knowledge, and oppose the authority of Jewish traditions to demonstration.

Here will I conclude, having said enough, I think, to show that the beginning of the world

is sufficiently proved, by the universality of tradition; that the testimony of Moses cannot be reputed an historical testimony, if we give no more credit to him than we should give to any other historian; and that we cannot admit his testimony for divine, without absurdity and blasphemy.

LETTERS, OR ESSAYS,

ADDRESSED TO

ALEXANDER POPE, ESQ.

LETTERS, OR ESSAYS,

ADDRESSED TO

ALEXANDER POPE, ESQ.

THE INTRODUCTION.

DEAR SIR,

SINCE you have begun, at my request, the work which I have wished long that you would undertake, it is but reasonable, that I submit to the task you impose upon me. Mere compliance with any thing you desire is a pleasure to me. On the present occasion, however, this compliance is a little interested; and that I may not assume more merit with you than I really have, I will own, that in performing this act of friendship, for such you are willing to esteem it, the purity of my motive is corrupted by some regard to my private utility. In short, I suspect you to be guilty of a very friendly fraud, and to mean my service, while you seem to mean your own.

In leading me to discourse, as you have done often, and in pressing me to write, as you do now, on certain subjects, you may propose to draw me back to those trains of thought, which are, above all others, worthy to employ the human mind,

and I thank you for it. They have been often interrupted by the business and dissipations of the world; but they were never so more grievously to me, nor less usefully to the public, than since royal seduction prevailed on me to abandon the quiet and leisure of the retreat I had chosen abroad, and to neglect the example of Rutilius; for I might have imitated him in this at least, who fled further from his country when he was invited home.

You have begun your Ethic Epistles in a masterly manner. You have copied no other writer, nor will you, I think, be copied by any one. It is with genius as it is with beauty; there are a thousand pretty things that charm alike; but superior genius, like superior beauty, has always something particular, something that belongs to itself alone. It is always distinguishable, not only from those who have no claim to excellence, but even from those who excel, when any such there are.

I am pleased, you may be sure, to find your satire turn in the very beginning of these Epistles, against the principal cause, for such you know that I think it, of all the errours, all the contradictions, and all the disputes which have arisen among those who impose themselves on their fellow-creatures for great masters, and almost sole proprietors, of a gift of God, which is common to the whole species. This gift is reason, a faculty, or rather an aggregate of faculties, that is bestowed, in different degrees, and

not

not in the highest, certainly, on those who make the highest pretensions to it. Let your satire chastise, and, if it be possible, humble that pride, which is the fruitful parent of their vain curiosity, and bold presumption; which renders them dogmatical in the midst of ignorance, and often sceptical in the midst of knowledge. The man who is puffed up with this philosophical pride, whether divine, or theist, or atheist, deserves no more to be respected, than one of those trifling creatures, who are conscious of little else than their animality, and who stop as far short of the attainable perfections of their nature, as the other attempts to go beyond them. You will discover as many silly affections, as much foppery and futility, as much inconsistency and low artifice, in one as in the other. I never met the mad woman at Brentford, decked out in new and old rags, and nice and fantastical in the manner of wearing them, without reflecting on many of the profound scholars and sublime philosophers of our own and of former ages.

You may expect some contradiction, and some obloquy on the part of these men, though you will have less to apprehend from their malice and resentment, than a writer in prose on the same subjects would have. You will be safer in the generalities of poetry, and I know your precaution enough to know, that you will screen yourself in them against any direct charge of heterodoxy. But the great clamour of all will be raised when you descend lower, and let your muse loose among

among the herd of mankind. Then will those powers of dullness, whom you have ridiculed into immortality, be called forth in one united phalanx against you. But why do I talk of what may happen? You have experienced lately something more than I prognosticate. Fools and knaves should be modest at least; they should ask quarter of men of sense and virtue; and so they do till they grow up to a majority; till a similitude of character assures them of the protection of the great. But then vice and folly, such as prevail in our country, corrupt our manners, deform even social life, and contribute to make us ridiculous as well as miserable, will claim respect for the sake of the vicious and the foolish. It will be then no longer sufficient to spare persons; for to draw even characters of imagination must become criminal, when the application of them to those of highest rank, and greatest power, cannot fail to be made. You began to laugh at the ridiculous taste, or the no taste in gardening and building, of some men who are at great expense in both. What a clamour was raised instantly? The name of Timon was applied to a noble person with double malice, to make him ridiculous, and you, who lived in friendship with him, odious. By the authority that employed itself to encourage this clamour, and by the industry used to spread and support it, one would have thought that you had directed your satire in that Epistle to political subjects, and had inveighed against those who impoverish, dishonour, and

and sell their country, instead of making yourself inoffensively merry at the expense of men who ruin none but themselves, and render none but themselves ridiculous. What will the clamour be, and how will the same authority foment it, when you proceed to lash, in other instances, our want of elegance even in luxury, and our wild profusion, the source of insatiable rapacity, and almost universal venality? My mind forebodes that the time will come, and who knows how near it may be, when other powers than those of Grub street may be drawn forth against you, and when vice and folly may be avowedly sheltered behind a power instituted for better, and contrary purposes; for punishment of one, and for the reformation of both.

But however this may be, pursue your task undauntedly, and while so many others convert the noblest employments of human society into sordid trades, let the generous muse resume her ancient dignity, reassert her ancient prerogative, and instruct and reform as well as amuse the world. Let her give a new turn to the thoughts of men, raise new affections in their minds, and determine in another and better manner the passions of their hearts. Poets, they say, were the first philosophers and divines, in every country; and in ours, perhaps, the first institutions of religion, and civil policy, were owing to our bards. Their task might be hard, their merit was certainly great. But if they were to rise now from the dead, they would find the second task, if I mistake

take not, much harder than the first, and confess it more easy to deal with ignorance than with errour. When societies are once established, and governments formed, men flatter themselves that they proceed in cultivating the first rudiments of civility, policy, religion, and learning. But they do not observe that the private interests of many, the prejudices, affections, and passions of all, have a large share in the work, and often the largest. These put a sort of bias on the mind, which makes it decline from the straight course; and the further these supposed improvements are carried, the greater this declination grows, till men lose sight of primitive and real nature, and have no other guide but custom, a second and a false nature. The author of one is Divine Wisdom, of the other, human imagination; and yet whenever the second stands in opposition to the first, as it does most frequently, the second prevails. From hence it happens, that the most civilised nations are often guilty of injustice and cruelty, which the least civilised would abhor; and that many of the most absurd opinions and doctrines, which have been imposed in the dark ages of ignorance, continue to be the opinions and doctrines of ages enlightened by philosophy and learning. If I was a philosopher, says Montaigne, I would naturalise art, instead of artilising nature. The expression is odd, but the sense is good, and what he recommends would be done, if the reasons that have been given did not stand in the way; if the self-interest of some men, the mad-

ness

ness of others, and the universal pride of the human heart, did not determine them to prefer errour to truth, and authority to reason.

While your muse is employed to lash the vicious into repentance, or to laugh the fools of the age into shame, and while she rises sometimes to the noblest subjects of philosophical meditation, I shall throw upon paper, for your satisfaction, and for my own, some part at least of what I have thought and said formerly on the last of these subjects, as well as the reflections that they may suggest to me further in writing on them. The strange situation I am in, and the melancholy state of public affairs, take up much of my time, divide or even dissipate my thoughts, and which is worse, drag the mind down, by perpetual interruptions, from a philosophical tone, or temper, to the drudgery of private and public business. The last lies nearest my heart; and since I am once more engaged in the service of my country, disarmed, gagged, and almost bound as I am, I will not abandon it as long as the integrity and perseverance of those who are under none of these disadvantages, and with whom I now cooperate, make it reasonable for me to act the same part. Further than this, no shadow of duty obliges me to go. Plato ceased to act for the commonwealth, when he ceased to persuade; and Solon laid down his arms before the public magazine, when Pisistratus grew too strong to be opposed any longer with hopes of success.

Though my situation and my engagements are sufficiently

sufficiently known to you, I choose to mention them on this occasion, lest you should expect from me any thing more than I find myself able to perform while I am in them. It has been said by many, that they wanted time to make their discourses shorter; and if this be a good excuse, as I think it may be often, I lay in my claim to it. You must neither expect, in what I am about to write to you, that brevity which might be expected in Letters or Essays, nor that exactness of method, nor that fulness of the several parts, which they affect to observe, who presume to write Philosophical Treatises. The merit of brevity is relative to the manner and style, in which any subject is treated, as well as to the nature of it; for the same subject may be sometimes treated very differently, and yet very properly, in both these respects. Should the poet make syllogisms in verse, or pursue a long process of reasoning in the didactic style, he would be sure to tire his reader on the whole, like Lucretius, though he reasoned better than the Roman, and put into some parts of his work the same poetical fire. He may write, as you have begun to do, on philosophical subjects, but he must write in his own character. He must contract, he may shadow, he has a right to omit whatever will not be cast in the poetic mould, and when he cannot instruct, he may hope to please. But the philosopher has no such privileges. He may contract sometimes, he must never shadow. He must be limited by his matter, lest he should grow whimsical; and by

by the parts of it which he understands best, lest he should grow obscure. But these parts he must develope fully; and he has no right to omit any thing that may serve the purpose of truth, whether it please, or not. As it would be disingenuous to sacrifice truth to popularity, so it is trifling to appeal to the reason and experience of mankind, as every philosophical writer does, or must be understood to do, and then to talk, like Plato, and his ancient and modern disciples, to the imagination only. There is no need however to banish eloquence out of philosophy; and truth and reason are no enemies to the purity, nor to the ornaments of language. But as the want of an exact determination of ideas, and of an exact precision in the use of words, is inexcusable in a philosopher, he must preserve them, even at the expense of style. In short, it seems to me, that the business of the philosopher is to dilate, if I may borrow this word from Tully, to press, to prove, to convince; and that of the poet to hint, to touch his subject with short and spirited strokes, to warm the affections, and to speak to the heart.

Though I seem to prepare an apology for prolixity even in writing Essays, I will endeavour not to be tedious; and this endeavour may succeed the better, perhaps, by declining any over strict observation of method. There are certain points of that which I esteem the First Philosophy, whereof I shall never lose sight; but this will be very consistent with a sort of epistolary licence. To digress, and to ramble, are different things; and

and he who knows the country through which he travels, may venture out of the high road, because he is sure of finding his way back to it again. Thus the several matters that may arise, even accidentally before me, will have some share in guiding my pen.

I dare not promise that the sections or members of these Essays will bear that nice proportion to one another, and to the whole, which a severe critic would require. All I dare promise you is, that my thoughts, in what order soever they flow, shall be communicated to you just as they pass through my mind, just as they use to be when we converse together on those, or any other subjects; when we saunter alone; or, as we have often done with good Arbuthnot, and the jocose Dean of St. Patrick's, among the multiplied scenes of your little garden. That theatre is large enough for my ambition. I dare not pretend to instruct mankind, and I am not humble enough to write to the public for any other purpose. I mean, by writing on such subjects as I intend here, to make some trial of my progress in search of the most important truths, and to make this trial before a friend, in whom, I think, I may confide. These Epistolary Essays, therefore, will be writ with as little regard to form, and with as little reserve, as I used to show in the conversations which have given occasion to them, when I maintained the same opinions, and insisted on the same reasons in defence of them.

It might seem strange to a man, not well acquainted

quainted with the world, and in particular with the philosophical and theological tribe, that so much precaution should be necessary in the communication of our thoughts on any subject of the First Philosophy, which is of common concern to the whole race of mankind, and wherein no one can have, according to nature and truth, any separate interest. Yet so it is. The separate interests we cannot have by God's institutions, are created by those of man; and there is no subject on which men deal more unfairly one with another than this. There are separate interests, to mention them in general only, of prejudice, and of profession. By the first, men set out in the search of truth under the conduct of errour, and work up their heated imaginations often to such a delirium, that the more genius, and the more learning they have, the madder they grow. By the second, they are sworn, as it were, to follow all their lives the authority of some particular school, to which "tanquam scopulo adhærescunt*;" for the condition of their engagement is to defend certain doctrines, and even mere forms of speech, without examination, or to examine only in order to defend them. By both, they become philosophers as men became Christians in the primitive church, or as they determined themselves about disputed doctrines: for, says Hilarius, writing to St. Austin, "Your Holiness knows, that the "greatest part of the faithful embrace, or refuse

* Tully.

" to embrace a doctrine, for no reason but the " impression which the name and authority of " some body or other makes on them." What now can a man who seeks truth, for the sake of truth, and is indifferent where he finds it, expect from any communication of his thoughts to such men as these? He will be much deceived, if he expects any thing better than imposition, or altercation.

Few men have, I believe, consulted others, both the living and the dead, with less presumption, and in a greater spirit of docility, than I have done; and the more I have consulted, the less have I found of that inward conviction, on which a mind that is not absolutely implicit can rest. I thought, for a time, that this must be my fault. I distrusted myself, not my teachers, men of the greatest name, ancient and modern. But I found, at last, that it was safer to trust myself than them, and to proceed by the light of my own understanding, than to wander after these " ignes fatui" of philosophy. If I am able, therefore, to tell you easily, and at the same time so clearly and distinctly as to be easily understood, and so strongly as not to be easily refuted, how I have thought for myself, I shall be persuaded that I have thought enough on these subjects. If I am not able to do this, it will be evident that I have not thought on them enough. I must review my opinions, discover, and correct my errours.

I have said, that the subjects I mean, and which will be the principal objects of these Essays,

are those of the First Philosophy, and it is fit, therefore, that I should explain what I understand by the First Philosophy. Do not imagine that I understand what has passed commonly under that name, metaphysical pneumatics, for instance, or ontology. The first are conversant about imaginary substances, such as may, and may not exist. That there is a God we can demonstrate; and although we know nothing of his manner of being, yet we acknowledge him to be immaterial, because a thousand absurdities, and such as imply the strongest contradiction, result from the supposition that the Supreme Being is a system of matter. But of any other spirits we neither have, nor can have any knowledge; and no man will be inquisitive about spiritual physiognomy, nor go about to inquire, I believe, at this time, as Evodius inquired of St. Austin, whether our immaterial part, the soul, does not remain united, when it forsakes this gross terrestrial body, to some æthereal body, more subtile, and more fine, which was one of the Pythagorean, and Platonic whimsies; nor be under any concern to know, if this be not the case of the dead, how souls can be distinguished after their separation, that of Dives, for example, from that of Lazarus. The second, that is ontology, treats most scientifically of Being abstracted from all Being, "de ente quatenus ens." It came in fashion while Aristotle was in fashion, and has been spun into an immense web out of scholastic brains. But it should be, and I think it is, already left to the acute disciples

of Leibnitz, who dug for gold in the ordure of the schools; and to other German wits. Let them darken by tedious definitions, what is too plain to need any; or let them employ their vocabulary of barbarous terms, to propagate an unintelligible jargon, which is supposed to express such abstractions as they cannot make, and according to which, however, they presume often to control the particular and most evident truths of experimental knowledge. Such reputed science deserves no rank in philosophy; not the last, and much less the first.

I desire you not to imagine neither, that I understand by the First Philosophy, even such a science as my Lord Bacon describes*, a science of general observations, and axioms, such as do not belong properly to any particular part of science, but are common to many, "and of a "higher stage," as he expresses himself. He complains, that philosophers have not gone up to the "spring-head," which would be of "general, and "excellent use for the disclosing of nature, and "the abridgment of art;" though they "draw "now and then a bucket of water out of the well "for some particular use." I respect, no man more, this great authority, but I respect no authority enough to subscribe, on the faith of it, to that which appears to me fantastical, as if it were real. Now this spring-head of science is purely fantastical, and the figure conveys a false notion

* Advan. of Learn. lib. 2.

to

to the mind, as figures, employed licentiously, are apt to do. The great author himself calls these "axioms," which are to constitute his First Philosophy, "observations." Such they are properly, for there are some uniform principles, or uniform impressions of the same nature to be observed in very different subjects, "una eadem-"que naturæ vestigia aut signacula diversis ma-"teriis & subjectis impressa." These observations, therefore, when they are sufficiently verified and well-established, may be properly applied in discourse, or writing, from one subject to another. But I apprehend that when they are so applied, they serve rather to illustrate a proposition than to "disclose nature," or to "abridge "art." They may have a better foundation than similitudes, and comparisons more loosely, and more superficially made. They may compare realities, not appearances; things that nature has made alike, not things that seem only to have some relation of this kind in our imaginations. But still they are comparisons of things distinct, and independent. They do not lead us to things; but things that are lead us to make them. He who possesses two sciences, and the same will be often true of arts, may find in certain respects a similitude between them, because he possesses both. If he did not possess both, he would be led by neither to the acquisition of the other. Such observations are effects, not means of knowledge; and therefore to suppose that any collection of them can constitute a science of a

"higher stage," from whence we may reason "à priori" down to particulars, is, I presume, to suppose something very groundless, and very useless, at best, to the advancement of knowledge. A pretended science of this kind must be barren of knowledge, and may be fruitful of errour, as the Persian magic was, if it proceeded on the faint analogy that may be discovered between physics and politics, and deduced the rules of civil government from what the professors of it observed of the operations, and works of nature in the material world. The very specimen of their magic, which my Lord Bacon has given, would be sufficient to justify what is here objected to his doctrine.

Let us conclude this head by mentioning two examples, among others, which he brings to explain the better what he means by his First Philosophy. The first is this axiom*, "if to unequals "you add equals, all will be unequal." This, he says, is an "axiom of justice, as well as of ma-"thematics," and he asks, whether there is not a "true coincidence between commutative and "distributive justice, and arithmetical and geo-"metrical proportion?" But I would ask, in my turn, whether the certainty, that any arithmetician or geometrician has of the arithmetical or geometrical truth, will lead him to discover this coincidence? I ask whether the most profound lawyer, who never heard, perhaps, this axiom, would be

* Si inæqualibus addas æqualia, omnia erunt inæqualia.

led

led to it by his notions of commutative and distributive justice? Certainly not. He who is well skilled in arithmetic, or geometry, and in jurisprudence, may observe, perhaps, this uniformity of natural principle or impression; because he is so skilled, though, to speak the truth, it be not very obvious: but he will not have derived his knowledge of it from any spring-head of a first philosophy, from any science of a "higher "stage" than arithmetic, geometry, and jurisprudence.

The second example is this axiom*, "that the "destruction of things is prevented by the reduc-"tion of them to their first principles." This rule is said to hold in religion, in physics, and in politics, and Machiavel is quoted for having established it in the last of these. Now, though this axiom be generally, it is not universally true; and to say nothing of physics, it will not be hard to produce, in contradiction to it, examples of religious and civil institutions, that would have perished if they had been kept strictly to their first principles, and that have been supported by departing more or less from them. It may seem justly matter of wonder, that the author of "The "Advancement of Learning" should espouse this maxim in religion and politics, as well as physics, so absolutely, and that he should place it as an axiom of his First Philosophy relatively

* Interitus rei arcetur per reductionem ejus ad principia.

to the three, since he could not do it without falling into the abuse he condemns so much in his "Organum Novum *;" the abuse philosophers are guilty of when they suffer the mind to rise too fast, as it is apt to do, from particulars to remote and general axioms. That the author of the "Political Discourses" should fall into this abuse, is not at all strange. The same abuse runs through all his writings, in which, among many wise and many wicked reflections and precepts, he establishes frequently general maxims, or rules of conduct on a few particular examples, and sometimes on a single example. Upon the whole matter, one of these axioms communicates no knowledge but that which we must have before we can know the axiom, and the other may betray us into great errour when we apply it to use and action. One is unprofitable, the other dangerous; and the philosophy, which admits them as principles of general knowledge, deserves ill to be reputed philosophy. It would have been just as useful, and much more safe, to admit into this receptacle of axioms, those self-evident, and necessary truths alone, of which we have an immediate perception, since they are not confined to any special parts of science, but are common to several, or to all. Thus these profitable axioms, "what is, is; the whole is bigger than a

* ——ut intellectus à particularibus ad axiomata remota et quasi generalissima, ——saliat, et volet,

"part,"

"part," and divers others, might serve to enlarge the spring-head of a First Philosophy, and be of excellent use in arguing, "ex præcognitis et præ-"concessis."

If you ask me now, what I understand then by a First Philosophy; my answer will be such as I suppose you already prepared to receive. I understand by a First Philosophy, that which deserves the first place on account of the dignity, and importance of it's objects, "natural theology "or theism, and natural religion or ethics." If we consider the order of the sciences in their rise and progress, the first place belongs to natural philosophy, the mother of them all, or the trunk of the tree of knowledge, out of which, and in proportion to which, like so many branches, they all grow. These branches spread wide, and bear even fruits of different kinds. But the sap that made them shoot, and makes them flourish, rises from the root through the trunk, and their productions are varied according to the variety of strainers through which it flows. In plain terms, I speak not here of supernatural, or revealed science, and therefore, I say, that all science, if it be real, must rise from below, and from our level. It cannot descend from above, nor from superiour systems of being and knowledge. Truth of existence is truth of knowledge, and therefore reason searches after them in one of these scenes, where both are to be found together and are within our reach; while imagination hopes fondly to find them in another, where both of them

them are to be found, but surely not by us. The notice we receive from without concerning the beings that surround us, and the inward consciousness we have of our own, are the foundations, and the true criterions, too, of all the knowledge we acquire of body and of mind; and body and mind are objects alike of natural philosophy. We assume, commonly, that they are two distinct substances. Be it so. They are still united, and blended, as it were, together in one human nature: and all natures, united or not, fall within the province of natural philosophy. On the hypothesis indeed that body and soul are two distinct substances, one of which subsists after the dissolution of the other, certain men, who have taken the whimsical title of metaphysicians, as if they had science beyond the bounds of nature, or of nature discoverable by others, have taken likewise to themselves the doctrine of mind, and have left that of body, under the name of physics, to a supposed inferiour order of philosophers. But the right of these stands good; for all the knowledge that can be acquired about mind, or the unextended substance of the Cartesians, must be acquired, like that about body, or the extended substance, within the bounds of their province, and by the means they employ, particular experiments and observations. Nothing can be true of mind, any more than of body, that is repugnant to these; and an intellectual hypothesis, which is not supported by the intellectual phænomena, is, at least, as ridiculous as a corporeal hypothesis

hypothesis which is not supported by the corporeal phænomena.

If I have said thus much in this place concerning natural philosophy, it has not been without good reason. I consider theology and ethics as the first of sciences in preeminence of rank. But I consider the constant contemplation of nature, by which I mean the whole system of God's works, as far as lies open to us, as the common spring of all sciences, and even of these. What has been said, agreeable to this notion, seems to me evidently true; and yet metaphysical divines and philosophers proceed in direct contradiction to it, and have thereby, if I mistake not, bewildered themselves and a great part of mankind, in such inextricable labyrinths of hypothetical reasoning, that few men can find their way back, and none can find it forward into the road of truth. To dwell long, and on some points always, in particular knowledge, tires the patience of these impetuous philosophers. They fly to generals. To consider, attentively, even the minutest phænomena of body and mind, mortifies their pride. Rather than creep up slowly, à posteriori, to a little general knowledge, they soar at once as far, and as high, as imagination can carry them. From thence they descend again, armed with systems and arguments à priori; and regardless how these agree or clash with the phænomena of nature, they impose them on mankind.

It is this manner of philosophising, this preposterous method of beginning our search after truth

out

out of the bounds of human knowledge, or of continuing it beyond them, that has corrupted natural theology, and natural religion, in all ages. They have been corrupted to such a degree, that it is grown, and was so long since, as necessary to plead the cause of God, if I may use this expression after Seneca, against the divine, as against the atheist; to assert his existence against the latter, to defend his attributes against the former, and to justify his providence against both. To both a sincere and humble theist might say very properly, "I make no difference between you "on many occasions; because it is indifferent* "whether you deny, or defame the Supreme "Being;" nay, Plutarch, though little orthodox in theology, was not in the wrong, perhaps, when he declared the last to be the worst.

In treating the subjects about which I shall write to you in these Letters, or Essays, it will be therefore necessary to distinguish genuine and pure theism, from the unnatural and profane mixtures of human imagination; "what we can "know of God, from what we cannot know." This is the more necessary too; because while true and false notions about God and religion are blended together in our minds, under one specious name of science, the false are more likely to make men doubt of the true, as it often happens, than to persuade men that they are true themselves. Now in order to this purpose, no-

* Utrum deum neges an infames.

thing

thing can be more effectual than to go to the root of errour, of that primitive errour which encourages our curiosity, sustains our pride, fortifies our prejudices, and gives pretence to delusion. This primitive errour consists in the high opinion we are apt to entertain of the human mind, though it holds, in truth, a very low rank in the intellectual system. To cure this errour, we need only turn our eyes inward, and contemplate impartially what passes there from the infancy to the maturity of the mind. Thus it would not be difficult, and thus alone it is possible, to discover the true nature of human knowledge, how far it extends, how far it is real, and where, and how it begins to be fantastical.

Such an inquiry, if it cannot check the presumption, nor humble the pride of metaphysicians, may serve to undeceive others. Lock pursued it. He grounded all he taught on the phænomena of nature. He appealed to the experience and conscious knowledge of every one, and rendered all he advanced intelligible. Leibnitz, one of the vainest and most chimerical men that ever got a name in philosophy, and who is often so unintelligible, that no man ought to believe he understood himself, censured Lock as a superficial philosopher. What has happened? The philosophy of one has forced it's way into general approbation: that of the other has carried no conviction, and scarce any information to those who have mispent their time about it. To speak the truth, though it may seem a paradox, our

knowledge, on many subjects, and particularly on those which we intend here, must be superficial to be real. This is the condition of humanity. We are placed, as it were, in an intellectual twilight, where we discover but few things clearly, and none intirely, and yet see just enough to tempt us with the hope of making better and more discoveries. Thus flattered, men push their inquiries on, and may be properly enough compared to Ixion, who "imagined he had Juno in "his arms while he embraced a cloud *."

To be contented to know things, as God has made us capable of knowing them, is then a first principle necessary to secure us from falling into errour; and if there is any subject upon which we should be most on our guard against errour, it is surely that which I have called here the "First Philosophy." God is hid from us in the majesty of his nature, and the little we discover of him, must be discovered by the light that is reflected from his works. Out of this light, therefore, we should never go in our inquiries and reasonings about his nature, his attributes, and the order of his providence: and yet upon these subjects, men depart the furthest from it, nay, they who depart the furthest, are the best heard by the bulk of mankind. The less men know, the more they believe that they know. Belief passes in their minds for knowledge: and the very circumstances, which should beget doubt,

* Lord Bacon.

produce

produce increase of faith. Every glittering apparition that is pointed out to them, in the vast wild of imagination, passes for a reality: and the more distant, the more confused, the more incomprehensible it is, the more sublime it is esteemed. He who should attempt to shift these scenes of airy vision, for those of real knowledge, might expect to be treated with scorn and anger, by the whole theological and metaphysical tribe, the masters, and the scholars. He would be despised as a plebeian philosopher, and railed at as an infidel. It would be sounded high, that he debased human nature, which has a cognation, so the reverend and learned Doctor Cudworth calls it, with the divine; that the soul of man, immaterial and immortal by it's nature, was made to contemplate higher and nobler objects than this sensible world, and even than itself; since it was made to contemplate God, and to be united to him. In such clamour as this, the voice of truth and of reason would be drowned, and with both of them on his side, he who opposed it would make many enemies, and few converts. Nay, I am apt to think, that some of these, if he made any, would say to him, as soon as the gaudy visions of errour were dispelled, and till they were accustomed to the simplicity of truth, "pol me "occidistis." Prudence forbids me, therefore, to write as I think to the world, while friendship forbids me to write otherwise to you. I have been a martyr of faction in politics, and have no vocation to be so in philosophy.

But

But there is another consideration which deserves more regard, because it is of a public nature, and because the common interests of society may be affected by it. Truth and falsehood, knowledge and ignorance, revelations of the Creator, inventions of the creature, dictates of reason, sallies of enthusiasm, have been blended so long together in our systems of theology, that it may be thought dangerous to separate them; lest, by attacking some parts of these systems, we should shake the whole. It may be thought, that errour itself deserves to be respected on this account, and that men who are deluded for their good, should be deluded on.

Some such reflections as these it is probable that Erasmus made, when he observed in one of his letters to Melancthon, that Plato, dreaming of a philosophical commonwealth, saw the impossibility of governing the multitude without deceiving them. "Let not Christians lie," says this great divine, "but let it not be thought neither, "that every truth ought to be thrown out to the "vulgar." "Non expedit omnem veritatem "prodere vulgo." Scævola and Varro were more explicit than Erasmus, and more reasonable than Plato. They held not only, that many truths were to be concealed from the vulgar, but that it was expedient the vulgar should believe many things that were false. They distinguished at the same time, very rightly, between the regard due to religions already established, and the conduct to be held in the establishment of them.

The

The Greek assumed, that men could not be governed by truth, and erected on this principle a fabulous theology. The Romans were not of the same opinion. Varro declared expressly, that if he had been to frame a new institution, he would have framed it "ex naturæ potius formulâ." But they both thought, that things evidently false might deserve an outward respect, when they are interwoven into a system of government. This outward respect every good citizen will show them in such a case, and they can claim no more in any. He will not propagate these errours, but he will be cautious how he propagates even truth, in opposition to them.

There has been much noise made about free thinking, and men have been animated, in the contest, by a spirit that becomes neither the character of divines, nor that of good citizens; by an arbitrary tyrannical spirit, under the mask of religious zeal, and by a presumptuous factious spirit, under that of liberty. If the first could prevail, they would establish implicit belief and blind obedience, and an inquisition to maintain this abject servitude. To assert antipodes might become once more as heretical as Arianism, or Pelagianism: and men might be dragged to the jails of some holy office, like Galileo, for saying they had seen what in fact they had seen, and what every one else, that pleased, might see. If the second could prevail, they would destroy at once the general influence of religion, by shaking the foundations of it which education had laid. These

are wide extremes. Is there no middle path, in which a reasonable man and a good citizen may direct his steps? I think there is.

Every one has an undoubted right to think freely; nay, it is the duty of every one to do so, as far as he has the necessary means and opportunities. This duty too is in no case so incumbent on him, as in those that regard, what I call, the First Philosophy. They who have neither means nor opportunities of this sort, must submit their opinions to authority: and to what authority can they resign themselves so properly, and so safely, as to that of the laws and constitution of their country? In general, nothing can be more absurd than to take opinions, of the greatest moment, and such as concern us the most intimately, on trust. But there is no help against it in many particular cases. Things the most absurd in speculation become necessary in practice. Such is the human constitution, and reason excuses them on the account of this necessity. Reason does even a little more; and it is all she can do. She gives the best direction possible to the absurdity. Thus she directs those who must believe, because they cannot know, to believe in the laws of their country, and conform their opinions and practice to those of their ancestors, to those of Coruncanius, of Scipio, of Scævola; not to those of Zeno, of Cleanthes, of Chrysippus*.

But now the same reason that gives this direc-

* De Nat. Deor.

tion

tion to such men as these, will give a very contrary direction to those who have the means and opportunities the others want. Far from advising them to submit to this mental bondage, she will advise them to employ their whole industry, to exert the utmost freedom of thought, and to rest on no authority but hers, that is their own. She will speak to them in the language of the Soufys, a sect of philosophers in Persia, that travellers have mentioned: "Doubt," say these wise and honest freethinkers, "is the key of "knowledge. He who never doubts, never ex- "amines. He who never examines, discovers "nothing. He who discovers nothing, is blind, "and will remain so. If you find no reason to "doubt concerning the opinions of your fathers, "keep to them; they will be sufficient for you. "If you find any reason to doubt concerning "them, seek the truth quietly; but take care not "to disturb the minds of other men."

Let us proceed agreeably to these maxims. Let us seek truth, but seek it quietly, as well as freely. Let us not imagine, like some who are called freethinkers, that every man, who can think and judge for himself, as he has a right to do, has therefore a right of speaking, any more than of acting, according to the full freedom of his thoughts. The freedom belongs to him as a rational creature. He lies under the restraint as a member of society.

If the religion we profess contained nothing more than articles of faith, and points of doctrine

clearly revealed to us in the Gospel, we might be obliged to renounce our natural freedom of thought in favour of this supernatural authority. But since it is notorious, that a certain order of men, who call themselves the Church, have been employed to make and propagate a theological system of their own, which they call Christianity, from the days of the Apostles, and even from these days inclusively; it is our duty to examine and analyse the whole, that we may distinguish what is divine from what is human; adhere to the first implicitly, and ascribe to the last no more authority than the word of man deserves.

Such an examination is the more necessary to be undertaken by every one who is concerned for the truth of his religion, and for the honour of Christianity, because the first preachers of it were not, and they who preach it still are not, agreed about many of the most important points of their system; because the controversies raised by these men have banished union, peace, and charity out of the Christian world; and because some parts of the system savour so much of superstition and enthusiasm, that all the prejudices of education, and the whole weight of civil and ecclesiastical power can hardly keep them in credit. These considerations deserve the more attention, because nothing can be more true, than what Plutarch said of old, and my Lord Bacon has said since; one, that "superstition," and the other, that "vain controversies" are principal causes of atheism.

I neither

I neither expect nor desire to see any public revision made of the present system of Christianity. I should fear an attempt to alter the established religion as much as they who have the most bigot attachment to it, and for reasons as good as theirs, though not entirely the same. I speak only of the duty of every private man to examine for himself, which would have an immediate good effect relatively to himself, and might have in time a good effect relatively to the public; since it would dispose the minds of men to a greater indifference about theological disputes, which are the disgrace of Christianity, and have been the plagues of the world.

Will you tell me, that private judgment must submit to the established authority of "Fathers" and "Councils?" My answer shall be, that the Fathers, ancient and modern, in councils, and out of them, have raised that immense system of "artificial theology," by which genuine Christianity is perverted, and in which it is lost. These "Fathers" are "Fathers" of the worst sort, such as contrive to keep their children in a perpetual state of infancy, that they may exercise perpetual and absolute dominion over them. "Quo magis "regnum in illos exerceant pro suâ libidine *." I call their theology "artificial," because it is, in a multitude of instances, conformable neither to the religion of nature, nor to Gospel Christianity, but often repugnant to both, though said to be

* Erasmus.

founded on them. I shall have occasion to mention several such instances in the course of these little Essays. Here I will only observe, that if it be hard to conceive how any thing so absurd as the pagan theology stands represented by the Fathers who wrote against it, and as it really was, could ever gain credit among rational creatures, it is full as hard to conceive how the "artificial" theology we speak of could ever prevail, not only in the ages of ignorance, but in the most enlightened. There is a letter of St. Austin, wherein he says, that he was ashamed of himself, when he refuted the opinions of the former; and that he was ashamed of mankind, when he considered that such absurdities were received, and defended *. The reflections might be retorted on the saint, since he broached and defended doctrines as unworthy of the Supreme All-perfect Being, as those which the heathens taught concerning their fictitious and inferior gods. Is it necessary to quote any other, than that by which we are taught, that God has created numbers of men for no purpose but to damn them? "Quisquis prædestinati-" onis doctrinam invidiâ gravat," says Calvin†, "apertè maledicit deo." Let us say, "Quis-" quis prædestinationis doctrinam asserit, blas-" phemat." Let us not impute such cruel injustice to the All-perfect Being. Let Paul, and Austin, and Calvin, and all those who teach it, be

* —— jam pudet me ista refellere cum eos non puduerit ista sentire. Cum verò ausi sint etiam defendere, &c.

† Cal. Ins. lib. 3. c. 21.

answerable

answerable for it alone. You may bring "Fa-"thers" and "Councils" as evidences in the cause of artificial theology: but "reason" must be the judge; and all I contend for is, that she should be so in the breast of every Christian that can appeal to her tribunal.

Will you tell me, that even such a private examination of the Christian system as I propose that every man, who is able to make it, should make for himself, is unlawful; and that if any doubts arise in our minds concerning religion, we must have recourse for the solution of them to some of that "holy order," which was instituted by God himself, and which has been continued, by the imposition of hands, in every Christian society, from the "Apostles" down to the present "clergy?" My answer shall be shortly this, it is repugnant to all the ideas of wisdom and goodness to believe, that the universal terms of salvation are knowable by the means of one order of men alone, and that they continue to be so even after they have been published to all nations. Some of your directors will tell you, that while Christ was on earth, the Apostles were the Church, that he was the Bishop of it; that afterward the admission of men into this order was approved, and confirmed by visions and other divine manifestations; and that these wonderful proofs of God's interposition at the ordinations and consecrations of presbyters and bishops lasted even in the time of St. Cyprian, that is, in the middle of the third century. It is pity that they lasted no

longer, for the honour of the Church, and for the conviction of those who do not sufficiently reverence the religious society. It were to be wished, perhaps, that some of the secrets of electricity were improved enough to be piously and usefully applied to this purpose. If we beheld a Shekinah, or divine presence, like the flame of a taper, on the heads of those who receive the imposition of hands, we might believe that they receive the "Holy Ghost" at the same time. But as we have no reason to believe what superstitious, credulous, or lying men, such as Cyprian himself was, reported formerly, that they might establish the proud pretensions of the clergy; so we have no reason to believe, that five men of this order have any more of the divine spirit in our time, after they are ordained, than they had before. It would be a farce to provoke laughter, if there was no suspicion of profanation in it, to see them gravely lay hands on one another, and bid one another receive the Holy Ghost.

Will you tell me, finally, in opposition to what has been said, that you may anticipate what remains to be said, that laymen are not only unauthorized, but quite unequal, without the assistance of divines, to the task I propose? If you do, I shall make no scruple to tell you, in return, that laymen may be, if they please, in every respect as fit, and are, in one important respect, more fit than divines, to go through this examination, and to judge for themselves upon it. We say that the Scriptures, concerning the divine authenticity

thenticity of which all the professors of Christianity agree, are the sole criterion of Christianity. You add tradition, concerning which there may be, and there is much dispute. We have then a certain invariable rule, whenever the Scriptures speak plainly. Whenever they do not speak so, we have this comfortable assurance, that doctrines, which nobody understands, are revealed to nobody, and are therefore improper objects of human inquiry. We know, too, that if we receive the explanations and commentaries of these dark sayings from the clergy, we take the greatest part of our religion from the word of man, not from the word of God. Tradition indeed, however derived, is not to be totally rejected; for if it was, how came the Canon of the Scriptures, even of the Gospels, to be fixed? How was it conveyed down to us? Traditions of general facts, and general propositions, plain and uniform, may be of some authority and use. But particular, anecdotical traditions, whose original authority is unknown, or justly suspicious, and that have acquired only an appearance of generality, and notoriety, because they have been frequently and boldly repeated from age to age, deserve no more regard, than doctrines evidently added to the Scriptures, under pretence of explaining and commenting them, by men as fallible as ourselves. We may receive the Scriptures, and be persuaded of their authenticity on the faith of ecclesiastical tradition; but it seems to me, that we may reject, at the same time, all the

the artificial theology, which has been raised on these Scriptures by doctors of the church, with as much right as they receive the Old Testament on the authority of Jewish scribes and doctors, while they reject the oral law, and all Rabbinical literature.

He who examines on such principles as these, which are conformable to truth and reason, may lay aside at once the immense volumes of fathers and councils; of schoolmen, casuists, and controversial writers, which have perplexed the world so long. Natural religion will be to such a man no longer intricate; revealed religion will be no longer mysterious, nor the Word of God equivocal. Clearness and precision are two great excellencies of human laws. How much more should we expect to find them in the law of God? They have been banished from thence by artificial theology; and he who is desirous to find them, must banish the professors of it from his councils, instead of consulting them. He must seek for genuine Christianity with that simplicity of spirit, with which it is taught in the Gospel by Christ himself. He must do the very reverse of what has been done by the persons you advise him to consult.

You see that I have said what has been said, on a supposition, that however obscure theology may be, the Christian religion is extremely plain, and requires no great learning, nor deep meditation to develope it. But if it was not so plain, if both these were necessary to develope it, is great

great learning the monopoly of the clergy since the resurrection of letters, as a little learning was before that æra? Is deep meditation, and justness of reasoning, confined to men of that order, by a peculiar and exclusive privilege? In short, and to ask a question which experience will decide, have these men, who boast that they are appointed by God to be the interpreters of his secret will, to represent his person, and answer in his name, as it were, out of the sanctuary*, have these men, I say, been able in more than seventeen centuries, to establish a uniform system of revealed religion, for natural religion never wanted their help, among the civil societies of Christians, or even in their own †? They do not seem to have aimed at this desirable end. Divided as they have always been, they have always studied in order to believe ‡, and to take upon trust, or to find matter of discourse, or to contradict and confute, but never to consider impartially, nor to use a free judgment. On the contrary, they who have attempted to use this freedom of judgment, have been constantly and cruelly persecuted by them.

The first steps toward the establishment of artificial theology, which has passed for Christianity ever since, were enthusiastical. They

* N. B. I choose to borrow these expressions from Calvin, in order to show how much they ascribe, who are supposed to ascribe the least, to this order.

† Cal. Ins. l. 4. c. 3.

‡ Bacon's Essays.

were

were not heretics alone, who delighted in wild allegories, and the pompous jargon of mystery. They were the orthodox fathers of the first ages, they were the disciples of the apostles, or the scholars of their disciples; for the truth of which I may appeal to the Epistles, and other writings of these men that are extant; to those of Clemens, of Ignatius, or Irenæus, for instance; and to the visions of Hermes, that have so near a resemblance to the productions of Bunyan.

The next steps of the same kind were rhetorical. They were made by men who declaimed much, and reasoned ill; but who imposed on the imaginations of others, by the heat of their own, by their hyperboles, their exaggerations, the acrimony of their style, and their violent invectives. Such were the Chrysostoms, the Jeroms, an Hilarius, a Cyril, and most of the Fathers.

The last of these steps I shall mention were logical; and these were made very opportunely, and very advantageously for the Church, and for artificial theology. Absurdity in speculation, and superstition in practice, had been cultivated so long, and were become so gross, that men began to see through the veils that had been thrown over them, as ignorant as those ages were. Then the Schoolmen arose. I need not display their character; it is enough known. This only I will say, that having very few materials of knowledge, and much subtility of wit, they wrought up systems of fancy on the little they knew; and invented an art, by the help of Aristotle, not of enlarging,

enlarging, but of puzzling, knowledge with technical terms, with definitions, distinctions, and syllogisms merely verbal: they taught what they could not explain, evaded what they could not answer, and he who had the most skill in this art, might put to silence, when it came into general use, the man who was consciously certain that he had truth and reason on his side.

The authority of the Schools lasted till the resurrection of letters. But as soon as real knowledge was enlarged, and the conduct of the understanding better understood, it fell into contempt. The advocates of artificial theology have had, since that time, a very hard task. They have been obliged to defend in the light what was imposed in the dark, and to acquire knowledge to justify ignorance. They were drawn to it with reluctancy. But learning, that grew up among the laity, and controversies with one another, made this unavoidable, which was not eligible, on the principles of ecclesiastical policy. They have done with these new arms, all that great parts, great pains, and great zeal could do under such disadvantages; and we may apply to this order, on this occasion, "si pergama dextrâ, &c." But their Troy cannot be defended; irreparable breaches have been made in it. They have improved in learning and knowledge; but this improvement has been general, and as remarkable, at least, among the laity as among the clergy. Beside which, it must be owned, that the former have had in this respect a sort of indirect obligation

obligation to the latter; for while these men have searched into antiquity, have improved criticism, and almost exhausted subtility, they have furnished so many arms the more to such of the others as do not submit implicitly to them, but examine and judge for themselves. By refuting one another, when they differ, they have made it no hard matter to refute them all, when they agree: and, I believe, there are few books written to propagate or defend the received notions of artificial theology, which may not be refuted by the books themselves. I conclude, on the whole, that laymen have, or need to have, no want of the clergy in examining and analysing the religion they profess.

But I said, that they are in one important respect more fit to go through this examination without the help of divines than with it. A layman, who seeks the truth, may fall into errour; but as he can have no interest to deceive himself, so he has none of profession to bias his private judgment, any more than to engage him to deceive others. Now the clergyman lies strongly under this influence, in every communion. How indeed should it be otherwise? Theology is become one of those sciences, which Seneca calls "scientiæ in lucrum exeuntes:" and sciences, like arts, whose object is gain, are, in good English, trades. Such theology is; and men who could make no fortune, except the lowest, in any other, make often the highest in this; for the proof of which assertion I might produce some

signal instances among my lords the bishops. The consequence has been uniform; for how ready soever the tradesmen of one church are to expose the false wares, that is, the errours and abuses of another, they never admit that there are any in their own: and he who admitted this, in some particular instance, would be driven out of the ecclesiastical company, as a false brother, and one who spoiled the trade.

Thus it comes to pass, that new churches may be established by the dissentions, but that old ones cannot be reformed by the concurrence of the clergy. There is no composition to be made with this order of men. He who does not believe all they teach, in every communion, is reputed nearly as criminal as he who believes no part of it. He who cannot assent to the Athanasian Creed, of which Archbishop Tillotson said, as I have heard, that he wished we were well rid, would receive no better quarter than an atheist, from the generality of the clergy. What recourse now has a man who cannot be thus implicit? Some have run into scepticisms, some into atheism, and for fear of being imposed on by others, have imposed on themselves. The way to avoid these extremes, is that which has been chalked out in this Introduction. We may think freely, without thinking as licentiously as divines do, when they raise a system of imagination on true foundations; or as sceptics do, when they renounce all knowledge; or as theists do, when they attempt to demolish the foundations of all religion,

religion, and reject demonstration. As we think for ourselves, we may keep our thoughts to ourselves, or communicate them with a due reserve, and in such a manner only, as it may be done without offending the laws of our country, and disturbing the public peace.

I cannot conclude my discourse on this occasion better, than by putting you in mind of a passage you quoted to me once, with great applause, from a sermon of Foster, and to this effect: "Where mystery begins, "religion ends." The apophthegm pleased me much, and I was glad to hear such a truth from any pulpit; since it shows an inclination, at least, to purify Christianity from the leaven of artificial theology, which consists principally in making things that are very plain mysterious, and in pretending to make things that are impenetrably mysterious very plain. If you continue still of the same mind, I shall have no excuse to make to you for what I have written, and shall write. Our opinions coincide. If you have changed your mind, think again, and examine further. You will find, that it is the modest, not the presumptuous inquirer who makes a real and safe progress in the discovery of divine truths. One follows nature, and nature's God; that is, he follows God in his works, and in his word; nor presumes to go further by metaphysical and theological commentaries of his own invention, than the two texts, if I may use this expression, carry him very evidently. They who have

have done otherwise, and have affected to discover, by a supposed science, derived from tradition, or taught in the schools, more than they who have not such science can discover, concerning the nature, physical and moral, of the Supreme Being, and concerning the secrets of his providence, have been either enthusiastics or knaves, or else of that numerous tribe who reason well very often, but reason always on some arbitrary supposition.

Much of this character belonged to the heathen divines, and it is, in all it's parts, peculiarly that of the ancient fathers and modern doctors, of the Christian Church. The former had reason, but no revelation to guide them; and though reason be always one, we cannot wonder that different prejudices, and different tempers of imagination, warped it in them, on such subjects as these, and produced all the extravagancies of their theology. The latter had not the excuse of human frailty to make in mitigation of their presumption. On the contrary, the consideration of this frailty, inseparable from their nature, aggravated their presumption. They had a much surer criterion than human reason; they had divine reason and the Word of God to guide them, and to limit their inquiries. How came they to go beyond this criterion? Many of the first preachers were led into it, because they preached or writ before there was any such criterion established, in the acceptance of which they all agreed; because they preached or writ in the mean time, on the faith of tradition, and on a

confidence that they were persons extraordinarily gifted. Other reasons succeeded these. Skill in languages, not the gift of tongues, some knowledge of the Jewish cabala, and some of heathen philosophy, of Plato's especially, made them presume to comment, and, under that pretence, to enlarge the system of Christianity, with as much licence as they could have taken, if the word of man, instead of the word of God, had been concerned, and they had commented the civil not the divine law. They did this so copiously, that, to give one instance of it, the exposition of St. Mathew's Gospel took up ninety homilies, and that of St. John's eighty-seven, in the works of Chrysostom; which puts me in mind of a puritannical person*, who, if I mistake not, for I have never looked into the folio since I was a boy, and condemned sometimes to read in it, made one hundred and nineteen sermons on the hundred and nineteenth psalm.

Now all these men, both Heathens and Christians, appeared gigantic forms through the false medium of imagination and habitual prejudice; but were, in truth, as arrant dwarfs in the knowledge to which they pretended, as you and I, and all the sons of Adam. The former, however, deserved some excuse: the latter none. The former made a very ill use of their reason, no doubt, when they presumed to dogmatize about the divine nature; but they deceived nobody. What they taught, they taught on their own au-

* Dr. Marston.

thority,

thority, which every man was at liberty to receive or reject, as he approved or disapproved the doctrine. Christians, on the other hand, made a very ill use of revelation and reason both. Instead of employing the superior principle to direct and confine the inferior, they employed it to sanctify all that wild imagination, the passions, and the interests of the ecclesiastical order suggested. This abuse of revelation was so scandalous, that while they were building up a system of religion, under the name of Christianity, every one who sought to signalize himself in the enterprise, and they were multitudes, dragged the Scriptures to his opinion, by different interpretations, paraphrases, and comments. Arius and Nestorius both pretended that they had it on their sides: Athanasius and Cyril on theirs. They rendered the Word of God so dubious, that it ceased to be a criterion, and they had recourse to another, to councils and the decrees of councils. He must be very ignorant in ecclesiastical antiquity, who does not know by what intrigues of the contending factions, for such they were and of the worst kind, these decrees were obtained: and yet an opinion prevailing that the Holy Ghost, the same divine spirit who dictated the Scriptures, presided in these assemblies and dictated their decrees, their decrees passed for infallible decisions, and sanctified, little by little, much of the superstition, the nonsense, and even the blasphemy which the fathers taught, and all the usurpations of the Church. This opinion prevailed,

and influenced the minds of men, so powerfully, and so long, that Erasmus, who owns, in one of his letters, that the writings of Oecolampadius, against transubstantiation, seemed sufficient to seduce even the elect, "ut seduci posse videantur etiam electi," declares in another, that nothing hindered him from embracing the doctrine of Oecolampadius, but the consent of the Church to the other doctrine, "nisi obstaret consensus ecclesiæ." Thus artificial theology rose on the demolitions, not on the foundations, of Christianity; was incorporated into it, and became a principal part of it. How much it becomes a good Christian to distinguish them in his private thoughts; at least, how unfit even the greatest, the most moderate, and the least ambitious of the ecclesiastical order are to assist us in making this distinction, I have endeavoured to show you by reason and by example.

It remains, then, that we apply ourselves to the study of the First Philosophy, without any other guides than the works and the word of God. In natural religion the clergy are unnecessary, in revealed they are dangerous guides.

ESSAY THE FIRST:

CONCERNING

THE NATURE, EXTENT, AND REALITY

OF

HUMAN KNOWLEDGE.

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SECTION I.

AMONG the many cavils that have been devised against the demonstrated existence of a first, intelligent, self-existent Cause of all things, this has been one; that things known must be anterior to knowledge, and that we may as well assert, that the images of objects we see reflected made those objects, as that knowledge or intelligence made them. Hobbes is accused of reasoning on this principle in his Leviathan, and his book De Cive, by the author of the Intellectual System of the Universe; and his argument in the place, where he mentions the notions that reason dictates to us concerning the divine attributes, is thus stated. "Since knowledge and "intelligence are nothing more in us than a "tumult of the mind, excited by the pressure of

" eternal objects on our organs, we must not " imagine there is any such thing in God, these " being things which depend on natural causes." Now I think this charge a little too hastily brought, and a little too heavily laid. So will any man who reads the context. Hobbes having said, that when we ascribe will to God, we must not conceive it to be in him what it is in us, but must suppose it to be something analogous, which we cannot conceive; he adds, " in like manner " when we attribute sight, and other sensations, " or knowledge and intelligence to God, which " are in us nothing more than a certain " tumult of the mind, excited by the pressure of " external objects on our organs, we must not " imagine that any thing like this happens to " God." I am far from subscribing to many notions which Hobbes has advanced. But still the plain and obvious meaning of this passage, according to my apprehension, is not to deny that the Supreme Being is an intelligent Being, but to distinguish between the Divine and human manner of knowing. If Hobbes did not assert a distinct kind of knowledge, and attribute " the " same clearly to God Almighty" upon this occasion, the omission will not serve to fix the brand of atheism upon him. On the contrary, whatever his other opinions were, this opinion may be reconciled to the most orthodox theism. It is more reasonable, and carries along with it a more becoming reverence, than the learned writer, who makes the objection, shows; when, like

like other divines, he supposes clearly, by his reflections on this passage, and indeed by the whole tenour of his writings, that intelligence and knowledge in God are the same as intelligence and knowledge in man; that the divine differs from the human in degrees, not in kind; and that, by consequence, if God has not the latter, he has none at all.

Absurd and impertinent vanity! We pronounce our fellow animals to be automates, or we allow them instinct, or we bestow graciously upon them, at the utmost stretch of liberality, an irrational soul, something we know not what, but something that can claim no kindred to the human mind. We scorn to admit them into the same class of intelligence with ourselves, though it be obvious, among other observations easy to be made, and tending to the same purpose, that the first inlets, and the first elements of their knowledge and of ours are the same. But of ourselves, we think it not too much to boast, that our intelligence is a participation of the divine intelligence; that the mind of man, like that of God, contains in it the ideas of intelligible natures; that it does not rise from particular to general knowledge, but descends from universals to singulars; hovers, as it were, aloft over all the corporeal universe; is independent of the bodies that compose it, or proleptical to them, and, in the order of nature, before them.

Such wild notions as these, or the magic of such unmeaning sounds and articulated air, which the warm imaginations of Asia and Africa first produced,

produced, have been echoed down to the present age; and have been propagated with so much success, even in our northern and cold climates; that the heads of many reverend persons have been turned, by a præternatural fermentation of the brain, or a philosophical delirium. None has been so more, I think, since the days of the latter Platonists, and the reign of the Schoolmen, who may be called properly the latter Peripatetics, than that of the divine I have just now quoted. He read too much to think enough; he admired too much to think freely; and it is impossible to forbear wishing, that he had taken due notice of a passage in Tully's Offices, "Ne ut quidem "Græca verba inculcantes jure optimo rideamur." Greek phraseology was in fashion among the Romans, as well as Greek philosophy, in Tully's days, and it is reasonable to believe, that many things passed then, under a Greek varnish, that would not have passed so well in mere Latin; just as we may observe, that many things have passed by the help of Greek and Latin among us, that would not have passed so well in mere English. Tully reformed this pedantry, indeed, but he did it rather with a view to enrich his language, than to determine his ideas; and he lost little or no advantage by the reformation: that advantage, I mean, which men take, who affect to know more than they do know, from which affectation the academicians, as much as they disclaimed knowledge, were not free. He invented Latin to answer Greek words; and readers, like writers, being

being apt to imagine that every new word denotes something new, this expedient served well enough to help out a system, or to get rid of troublesome objections. Thus vain phraseology has been always called in to the assistance of vain philosophy; and a learned mist has been raised in order to surprise and impose, or to escape. These are some part of the arguties verbales, against which Montaigne declaims: and, to speak in his style, they have served to enrich a man's tongue, but they will leave his understanding as poor as they found it, and much more perplexed.

I return to the subject immediately before me, and I say, that since there must have been something from eternity, because there is something now, the eternal Being must be an intelligent Being, because there is intelligence now; (for no man will venture to assert that nonentity can produce entity, or nonintelligence intelligence) and such a Being must exist necessarily, whether things have been always as they are, or whether they have been made in time; because it is no more possible to conceive an infinite than a finite progression of effects without a cause. Thus the existence of a God is demonstrated, and cavil against demonstration is impertinent. It is so impertinent, that he who refuses to submit to this demonstration, among others of the same kind, has but one short step more to make in order to arrive at the highest pitch of absurdity: for surely there is but one remove between a denial of the existence of God and a denial of our own existence; because, if we have

an intuitive knowledge of the latter, we have the same intuitive knowledge of all those ideas which connect the latter with the former, in demonstrating à posteriori.

Now if the existence of such a Being can be demonstrated, the atheist and the divine are both defeated. The atheist, because the intelligence of the First Cause of all things must have preceded all existence, except his own, with which it is coeternal. The divine, because an essential difference is established, in consequence of this demonstration, between God's manner of knowing and that which he has been pleased to bestow on his creatures. Human knowledge is not only posterior to the human system, but the very first elements of it are ideas which we perceive impressed by outward objects on our minds: and it will avail little to urge, that our minds must be still independent of outward objects, since we not only know what is, but can frame ideas of what may be, though it is not; because every man who pleases may perceive, that all the ideas he frames of what is not are framed by the combinations he makes of his ideas of what is, and in no other manner, nor by any other means whatsoever. Thus, then, if we could be supposed to know, that there is an ideal world in the divine intellect, according to which this sensible world was made, yet still the difference between the human and divine manner of knowing would admit of no comparison.

But it was too presumptuous in Plato to assert, that the Supreme Being had need of a plan, like some

some human architect, to conduct the great design, when he raised the fabric of the universe: and it is still more presumptuous to assert, not only that the divine intellect is furnished with ideas like the human, and that God reasons and acts by the help of them, but that your ideas and mine are God's ideas, and that the modifications (for that is the fashionable term) of our minds are the modifications of God's mind. We talk, indeed, of the eternal ideas of the divine mind, and allude to our manner of knowing, that we may understand ourselves and be understood by others the better, just as we are forced, very often, to employ corporeal images when we speak of the operations of our own minds. But these expressions, so much abused by those who are in the delirium of metaphysical theology, have no intention to be understood in a literal sense among men who preserve their reason. If they had, they should never be employed by me, since I should think them profane as well as presumptuous.

I should think them silly too and mere cant; for as one difference between God's manner of knowing and ours arises from what we are able to demonstrate concerning God, so there arises another from what we may know, if we shut our ears to the din of hard words, and turn our attention inwards concerning man, and concerning these very ideas. Our knowledge is so dependent on our own system, that a great part of it would not be knowledge, perhaps, but errour, in any other.

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They who held, as I learn from Doctor Cudworth that some philosophers did hold, that "sensible "ideas and phantasms are impressed on the "soul, as on a dead thing," maintained, no doubt, a great absurdity. Aristotle's opinion was more conformable to universal experience, for he asserted, according to Sextus Empiricus, that sense was like the instrument, and intellect like the artificer; that sense was first in the order of mental operations, but that intellect was first in dignity. Now this comparison is just enough. We have internal as well as external sense, mental as well as corporeal faculties, and active as well as passive powers, if you will allow passivity as well as activity to be included in the idea of power. But then, as our senses are few, incapable of giving us much information, and capable of giving it falsely, unless we are on our guard against their deceptions; so the faculties of our minds are weak, and their progress towards knowledge not only slow, but so confined, that they are not able to carry it to the full extent of the ideas about which they are conversant, and which they have all contributed to frame. We must conceive, as well as we can, the knowledge of the Supreme Being to be immediate and absolute. Knowledge in us is mediate, by the intervention of ideas; not only as far as sensible objects are concerned, and that goes a great way, but in the whole. It is such knowledge as we are fitted, by the organization of our bodies and the constitution of our minds, to acquire. It

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is such as results from the relation established between them and the system to which they belong. It is knowledge for us. It is, in one word, human and relatively to us, when it is rightly pursued, real knowledge.

General ideas or notions, such as the mind frames by it's innate powers, such as are said to be archetypes, and to refer to nothing besides themselves, may seem to be materials of axiomatical, scientifical, and, in a word, of absolute real knowledge. But even this boasted knowledge is very precarious. These ideas or notions are not taken with exactness from the nature of things, on many occasions; and the same affections, and imperfections of the mind, that corrupt the first, corrupt the subsequent operations of it. Ideas or notions are ill abstracted first, and ill compared afterwards. The more complex, the more obscure they are, and the more important, the more liable they are likewise to be abused by prejudices and habits that infect the mind, and put a wrong bias on it. But further; our progression in this knowledge, such as it is, stops always very short of our aim. We soon want ideas, or want means of comparing those we have, and it is in vain that we struggle to get forward. It is in vain that we endeavour to force that barrier, which God has opposed to our insatiable curiosity. To what purpose, indeed, should we force it, if that was in our power; since we have reason to acknowledge, with the utmost gratitude to the Author of our nature, that every thing necessary to our well-being

being, in the state wherein he has placed us, lies on the human side of this barrier; within that extent, I mean, where the operations of our minds are performed with ease and vigour, and are attended with the certainty of knowledge, or the sufficient probability of opinion? Not only unattainable, but difficult, very often, is a term synonimous to unnecessary; as we might prove, I think, by some examples drawn even from mathematical knowledge. In short, the profound meditations of philosophers, which we are so apt to admire before we have thought for ourselves, have as much regard paid to them as they deserve, when they are made the amusements of men of sense and leisure; when they are used as exercise, without any other aim than to invigorate and strengthen the mind, and prepare it for something more conducive to our happiness, and therefore more properly our business.

" The good, the just, the meet, the whole-
" some rules
" Of temperance and aught that may improve
" The moral life *."

This short account of human ideas, and human knowledge, no part of which can be applied, without blasphemy and absurdity, to the Supreme Being, nor be denied, without folly and effrontery, of the human, is sufficient, I suppose, to consti-

* John Phillips.

tute

tute another difference between God's manner of knowing and ours: a difference arising from those imperfections and limitations of which every man is conscious.

But it is time now to ask, what then is the precise notion we are to entertain of the human mind? Shall we continue to think, with some philosophers, ancient and modern, that the soul, the rational soul, for they have given us more than one, is a spiritual and divine substance, "furnished "with forms and ideas to conceive all things by, "and printed over with the seeds of universal "knowledge, though the active energies of it are "fatally united to some local motions in the "body, and concurrently produced with them, by "reason of the magical union betwixt the soul "and the body?" Shall we say, too, that from this union all the imperfections of the human mind proceed, and that the perfection of our nature is to be quite abstracted from sensation, like the Janguis, or illuminated saints of Indostan, whom Bernier mentions? Shall we endeavour, like these philosophers, by intenseness of thought, by fasting and other austerities, to rise up to the contemplation of the divinity, whom they assure that they see like a white, lively, ineffable light? Or shall we soften these pretensions a little, and embrace the system of a modern philosopher *, who affirms, that God is the place of ideas, as space is of body; and that

* Malebranche.

this all-perfect mind, containing the ideas of all created beings, it is in God alone that we perceive every thing exterior to the soul? Shall we assume, like another philosopher*, that our ideas are the only real sensible things; that we have no reason to imagine there are any substances but active thinking substances, and that it is absurd to ascribe power to bodies, or to suppose any power but active power, any agent but spirit, or any actions of spirit without volition?

Who does not see all this to be as inconceivable as that which it pretends to explain? Have the authors of such systems, from Plato down to that fine writer Malebranche, or to that sublime genius and good man, the Bishop of Cloyne, contributed to make us better acquainted with ourselves? I think not. They have done all that human capacity can do in a wrong method; but all they have done has been to vend us poetry for philosophy, and to multiply systems of imagination. They have reasoned about the human mind à priori, have assumed that they know the nature of it, and have employed much wit and eloquence to account for all the phænomena of it, upon these assumptions. But the nature of it is as much unknown as ever; and we must despair of having any real knowledge at all about it, unless we will content ourselves with that which is to be acquired à posteriori. The mind of man is an object of physics as much as the body of man,

* Berkeley.

or

or any other body: and the distinction that is made between physics and metaphysics is quite arbitrary. His mind is part of his nature, as well as his body. Both of them together constitute his whole being; and as the first is the most noble part, I presume, we should determine his species by it principally, which we do not, if his mind was not more liable than his figure to be confounded with that of other animals. Let us content ourselves, therefore, to trace his mind, to observe it's growth, and the progress it makes from it's infancy to it's maturity. Let us be content with particular and experimental knowledge, upon which we may found a few general propositions, such as are or may be properly called axiomata media. But let us aim no longer at a general knowledge too remote for our search; nor hope to discover more of intellectual nature, by internal sense, than we are able to discover of corporeal nature by external. All that we can know of one and the other is, that we have such and such senses, and such and such faculties, and that divers sensations of the body and operations of the mind are produced in them on such and such apparent occasions.

SECT. II.

To measure rightly our intellectual strength, and to apply it properly, in order neither to impose nor be imposed upon, is our point of view.

I shall not, therefore, say any thing further about the nature of mind in general, that secret spring of thought, unknown and unknowable; but shall content myself to observe, in Mr. Locke's method, and with his assistance, something about the phænomena of the human mind, by which we may judge surely of the nature, extent, and reality of human knowledge. I say, we may judge surely of them; because our ideas are the foundations or the materials, call them which you please, of all our knowledge; because, without entering into an inquiry concerning the origin of them, we may know so certainly, as to exclude all doubt, what ideas we have; and because, when we know this, we know with the same certainty what kinds and degrees of knowledge we have, and are capable of having.

Thus we know, that the first ideas with which the mind is furnished are received from without, and are caused by such sensations as the presence of external objects excites in us, according to laws of passion and action, which the Creator has established. What these laws are, and how external objects become able to make such impressions on our organs, we know as little, and it is impossible to know any thing less, as those philosophers do who have pretended, most extravagantly, to explain these laws, and to account for these impressions; or as those philosophers know of another system, who denying, as extravagantly, that any such power can belong to body, and affirming that it is absurd to talk of passive power, confine

confine all activity, and ascribe all such ideas of sensation, to spirit alone. We are far from knowing how body acts on body, or spirit on spirit; how body operates on mind and produces thought, or how mind operates on body, and produces corporeal motion. But this I know, that a leaf of wormwood conveys to my mind, by the sense of sight, and that of touch, for instance, the ideas of colour, extension, figure, and solidity, as certainly as I know that it conveys thither, by the sense of taste, the idea of bitter; and as certainly as I know that the act of my mind, called volition, produced the motion of my hand which gathered the leaf. Our ignorance of causes does not hinder our knowledge of effects. This knowledge has been thought sufficient for us, in these cases, by Infinite Wisdom; and nothing can be more ridiculous than to hear men affirm dogmatically, when they guess at most, and that very wildly and very precariously.

As these ideas come to us from without, so there are others that arise in the mind, and proceed from the perception of it's own operations; to which a still greater number is to be added, that arise there from the concurrence of these joint causes, from perceptions of outward and inward operations, from external and internal sense. Perception is the first faculty the mind exerts, and is common, whatever some of the others may be, to us and to the whole animal kind. The faculties that come in play afterward seem to be active, but this seems to be passive; for we per-

ceive ideas, however raised in the mind, whether we will or no: their esse is percipi; to have them we must perceive that we have them. Without this passive power, or this faculty, external objects might act upon us, but they would act to little purpose, for they would excite no ideas: as, on the other hand, without this action of external objects, the power or faculty of perception would be useless, or rather null, and, by consequence, all the other powers or faculties of the mind.

There is nothing, philosophically speaking, at least I could never find, to my sorrow, that there is any thing, which obliges us necessarily to conclude, that we are a compound of material and immaterial substance. If we are so, contrary to all appearances, (for they denote plainly one single system, all the parts of which are so intimately connected, and dependent one on another, that the whole begins, proceeds, and ends together) this union of a body and a soul must be magical indeed, as Doctor Cudworth calls it. So magical, that the hypothesis serves to no purpose in philosophy, whatever it may do in theology; and is still less comprehensible than the hypothesis which assumes, that, although our idea of thought be not included in the idea of matter or body, as the idea of figure is, for instance, in that of limited extension, yet the faculty of thinking, in all the modes of thought, may have been superadded by Omnipotence to certain systems of matter; which it is not less than blasphemy to deny, though

though divines and philosophers, who deny it in terms, may be cited; and which, whether it be true or no, will never be proved false by a little metaphysical jargon about essences, and attributes, and modes.

But, however this may be, concerning which it becomes men little to be as dogmatical as they are on one side of this question at least; and whatever strength and vigour, independent on the body, may be ascribed to the soul, the soul exerts none till it is roused into activity by sense. A jog, a knock, a thrust from without is not knowledge *. No. But if we did not perceive these jogs, knocks, and thrusts from without, we should remain just as we came into the world, void even of the first elements of knowledge. Not only the inward, active powers of the mind would be unemployed, but we may say, that they would be nonexistent. The human soul is so far from being furnished with forms and ideas to perceive all things by, or from being impregnated, I would rather say than printed over, with the seeds of universal knowledge, that we have no ideas till we receive passively the ideas of sensible qualities from without. Then, indeed, the activity of the soul or mind commences, and another source of original ideas is opened: for then we acquire ideas from, and by the operation of, our minds. Sensation would be of little use to form the understanding, if we had no other faculty than

* Cudworth.

mere passive perception; but, without sensation, these other faculties would have nothing to operate upon; reflection would have, by consequence, nothing to reflect upon; and it is by reflection that we multiply our stock of ideas, and fill that magazine, which is to furnish all the materials of future knowledge. In this manner, and no other, we may say, "that all our ideas arise from our "senses, and that there is nothing in the mind "which was not previously in the sense." But these propositions should not be advanced, perhaps, as generally as they are sometimes by logicians, lest they should lead into errour, as maxims are apt to do very often. Sensation is the greater, reflection the smaller source of ideas. But these latter are as clear and distinct, and convey knowledge that may be said to be more real than the former. Sense gave occasion to them, but they never were in sense, properly speaking. They are, if I may say so, of the mind's own growth, the elements of knowledge, more immediate, less relative, and less dependent than sensitive knowledge, as any man will be apt to think, who compares his ideas of remembering, recollecting, bare thought, and intenseness of thought, with those of warm and hot, of cool and cold. Descartes might have said, "I "see, I hear, I feel, I taste, I smell; there-"fore I am." But surely he might say too, "I "think, I reflect, I will; therefore I am." Let us observe, however, that it belongs only to a great philosopher to frame an argument to prove

prove to himself that he exists, which is an object of intuitive knowledge, and concerning which it is impossible he should have any doubt. In the mouth of any other person, "I think, therefore "I am," would be very near akin to I am, therefore I am *.

Thus it will appear, when we contemplate our understanding in the first step towards knowledge, that corporeal, animal sense, which some philosophers hold in great contempt, and which does not deserve much esteem, communicates to us our first ideas, sets the mind first to work, and becomes, in conjunction with internal sense, by which we perceive what passes within, as by the other what passes without us, the foundation of all our knowledge. This is so evidently true, that even those ideas, about which our reason is employed in the most abstract meditations, may be traced back to this original, by a very easy analyse. Since these simple ideas therefore are the foundations of human knowledge, this knowledge can neither be extended wider, nor elevated higher, than in a certain proportion to them. If we consider these ideas like foundations, they are extremely narrow and shallow, neither reaching to many things, nor laid deep in the nature of

* Je ne vois pas que vous ayez eu besoin d'un grand appareil, puisque d'ailleurs vous étiez déjà certain de votre existence, et que vous pouviez inférer la même chose de quelque autre que ce fut de vos actions, étant manifesté par la lumière naturelle que tout ce qui agit est, ou existe.

Objec. of Gassendi to the second Medit.

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any. If we consider them like materials, for so they may be considered likewise, employed to raise the fabric of our intellectual system, they will appear like mud, and straw, and lath, materials fit to erect some frail and homely cottage, but not of value sufficient for the construction of those enormous piles, from whose lofty towers philosophers would persuade us that they discover all nature subject to their inspection; that they pry into the sources of all being, and into the inmost recesses of all wisdom. But it fares with them, as it did with the builders in the plains of Senaar, they fall into a confusion of languages, and neither understand one another, nor are understood by the rest of mankind.

Having taken this view of our first and simple ideas, it is necessary, in order to make a true estimate of human knowledge, that we take such a view likewise of those faculties by the exercise of which our minds proceed in acquiring knowledge. I have mentioned perception; and retention, or memory, ought to follow: for as we should have no ideas without perception, so we should lose them, as fast as we get them, without retention. When it was objected to Descartes, that, if thought was the essence of the soul, the soul of the child must think in the mother's womb; and when he was asked, how it came to pass that we remember none of those thoughts; he maintained, according to his usual method, one hypothesis by another; and assumed, that memory consists in certain traces made on the brain

brain by the thoughts that passs through it, and that as long as they last we remember; but that the brain of a child in the womb being too moist and too soft to preserve these traces, it is impossible he should remember out of the womb what he thought in it. Thus memory seems to be made purely corporeal by the same philosopher, who makes it on some occasions purely intellectual. He might distinguish two memories by the same hypothetical power by which he distinguished two substances, that he might employ one or the other as his system required. If you consult other philosophers on the same subject, you will receive no more satisfaction: and the only reasonable method we can take, is to be content to know, intuitively, and by inward observation, not the cause, but the effects of memory, and the use of it in the intellectual system.

By this faculty then, whatever it be, our simple ideas, which have been spoken of already, are preserved with greater, and our complex ideas, which remain to be spoken of, with less facility. Both one and the other require to be frequently raised in the mind, and frequently recalled to it. I say, with the rest of the world, to be raised, and to be recalled; but surely these words come very short of expressing the wonderful phænomena of memory. The images that are lodged in it present themselves often to the mind without any fresh sensation, and so spontaneously, that the mind seems as passive in these secondary perceptions, as it was in receiving the first impressions.

pressions. Our simple ideas, and even our complex ideas and notions, return sometimes of themselves, we know not why or how, mechanically, as it were, uncalled by the mind, and often to the disturbance of it in the pursuit of other ideas, to which these intruders are foreign. On the other hand, we are able, at our will, and with a design, to put a sort of force on memory; to seize, as it were, the end of some particular line, and to draw back into the mind a whole set of ideas that seem to be strung to it, or linked one with the other. In general; when images, essences, ideas, notions, that existed in any mind, are gone out of it, and have no longer any existence there, the mind is often able to will them into existence again, by an act of which we are conscious, but of which we know nothing more, than that the mind performs it. These phænomena are more surprising, and less to be accounted for, than the action of external objects on the organs of sense in the first production of ideas; which is an observation that deserves the notice of those philosophers who deny such action, because they cannot comprehend it.

But still this faculty is proportioned to our imperfect nature, and therefore weak, slow, and uncertain in it's operations. Our simple ideas fade in the mind, or fleet out of it, unless they are frequently renewed: and the most tenacious memory cannot maintain such as are very complex, without the greatest attention and a constant care, nor always with both. All our ideas in general

neral are recalled slowly by some, and successively by every mind. Themistocles was famous, among other parts wherein he excelled, for his memory; but when he refused the offer Simonides made him, it was, I suppose, because he did not want the poet's skill to improve his memory, and because he knew by experience, that the great defects of this faculty are neither to be cured, nor supplied by art. In what proportion soever it is given, it may be improved to some degree, no doubt; but memory will never present ideas to the human mind, as it does perhaps to superior intelligencies, like objects in a mirror, where they may be viewed at every instant, all at once, without effort or toil, in their original precision, such as they were when they first came into the mind, or when they were first framed by it. Could memory serve us in this manner, our knowledge would be still very imperfect; but many errours into which we fall, and into which we are seduced, would be avoided; and the endless chicane of learned disputation would be stopped in a great measure. It is for this reason I have said so much of this faculty of the mind, as you will have occasion soon to observe.

The faculties, necessary for my purpose to be mentioned next, are those of compounding simple into complex ideas, and of comparing our ideas; which implies the just and nice discernment of them, in order to perceive the innumerable relations which they bear to one another. These are some of the steps by which the mind attempts

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to rise from particular to general knowledge. They have been called arts of the mind, but improperly, in some respects; for though the mind is forced to employ several arts, and to call in sense to the aid of intellect, even after it has full possession of it's ideas, to help out it's imperfect manner of knowing, and to lengthen a little it's short tether; yet the composition and comparison of ideas is plainly a lesson of nature: this lesson is taught us by the very first sensations we have. As the mind does not act till it is roused into action by external objects, so when it does act, it acts conformably to the suggestions it receives from these impressions, and takes with it's first ideas the hints how to multiply and improve them. If nature makes us lame, she gives crutches to lean upon. She helps us to walk where we cannot run, and to hobble where we cannot walk. She takes us by the hand, and leads us by experience to art.

Nature then has united in distinct substances, as we commonly speak, various combinations of those qualities, each of which causes in us the sensation it is appropriated to cause, and our organs are fitted to receive; so that several being thus combined, and making their impression together, may be said to cause a complex sensation. Thus we receive, among other ideas, those of soft and warm at the same instant, from the same piece of wax; or of hard and cold from the same piece of ice. Thus again; we receive the more complex ideas which substances still more

composed

composed, that is, substances wherein a greater variety of these qualities coexists, are fitted to raise in us; such, for instance, as the idea of a man, or a horse. As soon as we are born, various appearances present themselves to the sight; the din of the world strikes our ears; in short, a multitude of impressions, made on the tender organs of sense, convey a multitude of ideas simple and complex, confusedly, and continually, into the mind. The latter, indeed, whether nature obtrudes them, or we make them, are composed of the former; and therefore we give very properly the first place to these in all discourses concerning ideas. But they have a priority of order rather than of existence; for the complex idea of the nurse comes into the mind as soon as the eyes of the child are opened; and is, most probably, the first idea received by the sight, though the simple idea, produced by the taste of milk, may have got into the mind a little sooner. Nor does the lesson of nature end here: she carries it on to all the different compositions of our simple ideas, and to all the different combinations we frame of our simple and complex ideas; from substances to modes, the dependencies and affections of substances, and from them to the relations of things one to another; that is, she carries it on to all the operations of the mind, and to all the objects of our thoughts, in the acquisition of our knowledge.

If I meaned by modes nothing but manners of being, as some do, I should not ascribe our ideas

ideas of them to a further lesson of nature. She taught us this lesson, when she obtruded on us the complex idea of substances. At least, it seems to me, who cannot comprehend the distinction of substances, and of mode or manner of being, as of two ideas that may be perceived separately; the one of a thing that subsists by itself, the other of a manner of being which cannot subsist by itself, but determines this thing to be what it is. I cannot consider a mode, without referring it in my mind to something, of which it is or may be the mode: neither can I consider a substance otherwise than relative to it's modes, as something whereof I have no idea, and in which the modes, of which I have ideas, subsist. The complex idea we have of every substance is nothing more than a combination of several sensible ideas, which determine the apparent nature of it to us. I say the apparent nature, and to us; for I cannot agree that these modes, such of them as fall under our observation, limit the real nature, or determine even the apparent nature, to other beings. On the whole, it appears, whenever we consider this matter further, that the far greatest part of what has been said by philosophers about Being and substance, indeed all they have advanced beyond those clear and obvious notions which every thinking man frames, or may frame, without their help, is pure jargon, or else something very trite, disguised under a metaphysical mask, and called by a hard name, ontology, or ontosophy.

But

But to proceed, or rather to return; I understand by mode, in this place, something else, something that carries our knowledge further than the complex ideas of substances. I understand, in short, what Mr. Locke understands by simple and mixed modes. The various combinations that our minds make of the same simple idea, and the various compositions that they make of simple ideas of different kinds. These ideas, added to those of substances, and the whole stock completed by such as the mind acquires of the relations of it's ideas, in comparing them as far as it is able to compare them, make up the intire system of human knowledge: and in the process of it, from first to last, we are assisted, directly or indirectly, by the lessons of nature, that have been, or that are to be mentioned.

Ideas of things computable and measurable are the objects of mathematics. Ideas of moral and immoral actions are the objects of ethics. From whence has the mathematician his first ideas of number, or his first ideas of solid extension, of lines, surfaces, and figures? From whence has the moralist his first ideas of happiness and unhappiness, of good and evil? The mind can exercise a power, in some sort arbitrary, over all it's simple ideas; that is, it can repeat them at it's pleasure, and it can frame them into complex ideas, without any regard to actual, though with a regard to possible existence; which regard will be always preserved, unless the mind be disordered. The mind then has a power of framing

all the different compositions and combinations of ideas about which these sciences are conversant; but yet these operations are not performed by the native energy of the mind alone, without any help, without any pattern. Nature lends the help, nature sets the pattern, when complex ideas of these modes and relations force themselves on the mind, as the complex ideas of substances do.

That every distinct object of external and internal sense gives us the idea of a unit, or of one, is obvious to reflection; and, I think, it is no less obvious, that these objects suggest to the mind, nay, oblige the mind to make various repetitions of this idea, and to frame all the simple modes of number by adding unit to unit. Thus, for instance, we look up by day and we see one sun, by night and we see one moon. Plutarch's countryman, indeed, counted two moons; for he could not conceive that the moon he had left behind him in Bœotia, and that he saw at Athens were the same. But though we see but one sun and one moon, we see many stars. We attempt to count them; that is, we assign marks or sounds to signify how many times we repeat the idea of a unit, which each of them gives us separately; or else we form a confused idea of numberless repetitions of this idea, like the savages, who lift up both hands and extend their fingers, to show that they have seen ten suns on their journey, or hold out a handful of their hair, when they want to signify a number of suns which they cannot

cannot signify otherwise; because they have neither sounds nor marks for the greater collections of units.

As arithmetic is one, so is geometry another constituent part of mathematics, and the very name points out to us, not only the object, but the original of this science. I do not believe, on the word of Herodotus, nor even of Strabo, that the Egyptians were the inventors of it. I believe this almost as little, as I believe, on the word of Josephus, that antediluvian astronomers had engraved their observations on two pillars, which existed in his time. But this tradition, whereby the invention of geometry is ascribed to a nation more ancient than tradition itself, though it may be fabulous, communicates to us, like many others that are so, a true fact. The true fact, I think, is this; that as soon as men ceased to range the woods and plains in common, like their fellow animals, if they ever did so; as soon as societies were formed, and in those societies a division of property was made; nature, that led them to assign, led them to ascertain possessions. They did both, most probably, at first, by sight and guess. They paced out these possessions afterward in length and breadth; and ideas of modes of space were framed like ideas of modes of number: a unit, twelve times repeated, makes a dozen; twenty times repeated it makes a score. The length of one of their feet was, to these first geometricians, like a unit to the first arithmeticians. So many feet, five I think, according to

Pliny, made a pace, and one hundred and five and twenty of these made a stated measure of distance that continued long in use; for the stadium consisted of one hundred and twenty-five paces, according to the same author. Thus measuring, the practical part of geometry, came into use: and when it had been applied to two dimensions, it was soon applied to all three. The use of it was great, not only in the first distribution of property, but in every alteration of it; and especially after such confusions of it, as the inundations of the Nile might cause annually in Egypt, or other devastations in that and in other countries.

Nature that urged men, by necessity, to invention, helped them to invent. The natural face of a country taught them to give it an artificial face, and their own first rude essays in laying out lands, and building habitations, led them to contemplate the properties of lines, surfaces, and solids; and, little by little, to form that science, the pride of the human intellect, which has served to so many great and good purposes, and the application of which is grown, or growing perhaps, into some abuse. Nature set the example; example begot imitation, imitation practice, practice introduced speculation, and speculation in it's turn improved practice. I might easily run through other examples of the same kind, to show how the first principles of arts and sciences are derived from ideas furnished by the productions and operations of nature, such as our

senses

senses represent them to us; nay, how instinct instructs reason, the instinct of other animals the reason of man. But this would be superfluous trouble in writing to you, who have touched this subject so well, where you introduce nature speaking to man, in the third of your Ethic Epistles.

I will only mention, as I proposed to do, the ideas or notions about which moral philosophy is conversant. I distinguish here, which I should have done perhaps sooner, and I think with good reason, between ideas and notions: for it seems to me, that as we compound simple into complex ideas, so the compositions we make of simple and complex ideas may be called, more properly, and with less confusion and ambiguity, notions. Simple ideas, simple modes, complex ideas, mixed modes, and relations of all these, as well as the relations of the relations, are frequently blended together voluntarily, as use invites or judgment directs; and, thus blended, they may therefore seem to be original and untaught. But yet certain it is, that such notions as these obtrude themselves on the mind, as naturally and as necessarily, though not so directly nor immediately, as the complex ideas of substances, or any other complex ideas. Let us observe this in an example. We see one man kill another: and the complex idea, signified by the word kill, is obtruded on our sense as much as the complex idea of the man killed, or of his killer. The mind re-

tains this image, and joining to it various ideas of circumstances and relations of causes and effects, of motives and consequences, all which ideas have been raised in our minds by experience and observation; such notions as we intend by the words murder, assassination, parricide, or fratricide are framed.

Nature teaches us by experience and observation, not only to extend our notions, but to distinguish them with greater precision; just as we learn to rectify simple ideas of sensation, and to control sense by sense, if I may say so. Mr. Locke observes, that we learn first the names of these complex ideas and notions from other men, and the signification of them afterward; which is true, and it is the most early and most common method whereby we acquire them. But this makes no alteration in the case. Whether the impressions that excited these complex ideas, and gave the mind occasion and means to form these notions, were made on our minds, or on the minds of other men; and whether the names that signify them were given by us or by others, it is plain that nature taught mankind to make them, directly, when she obtruded them, and indirectly, when we seemed to invent them without any assistance from outward objects. The first is evident of itself, and the second will appear so too, if we consider that in learning their names and the signification of these names, we learn to decompound them; and that by learning to decompound some, the mind was instructed to compound

compound others, even such, perhaps, as existed by these means, in idea and notion, before the combinations, whereof they became the archetypes, existed in act. Our ideas of relations, and of the relations of relations, which are comprehended so often in our complex ideas or notions, are not positive beings that exist by themselves, and can be contemplated by themselves. Modes are the affections and dependencies of substances; relations are the affections and dependencies of substances and modes; and no one of them can exist any longer than both the ideas that produced it, or by the comparison of which it was framed, subsist. It might seem, therefore, the less likely, that outward objects should communicate such ideas to the mind, or even instruct the mind to frame them; and yet so it is. That act of the mind that sets two objects before our internal sight, and, by referring from one to the other, includes both in the same consideration, is plainly suggested to us by the operations of outward objects on our senses. We can neither look up nor down without perceiving ideas of bigger and less, of more and fewer, of brighter and darker, and a multitude of other relations, the ideas of which arise in the mind as fast as the ideas of things of which they express the relations, and almost prevent reflection. When the mind, thus taught, employs reflection, the number of these relative ideas increases vastly. Thus, for instance, when we observe the alterations that

are made by nature or by art, in our complex ideas of substances, or when we reflect on the continual vicissitude and flux of all the affections and passions, and the consequences of them, how can we avoid framing the ideas of cause and effect? That which produces, or seems to us to produce the alteration, gives us the idea of cause, and that which receives the alteration gives us the idea of effect. I go no further into the consideration of our ideas of relations, physical and moral. They are numberless, and they must needs be so; since every idea or notion we have, though it be in itself one single object of thought, becomes the object of a thousand, when it is compared with all those with which it may be compared in some respect or other.

SECT. III.

These, and such as these, are all the ideas we have really, and are capable of having, derived originally from sense, external and internal. These too, and such as these, are the faculties by which we improve and increase our stock, and such as all these are, such must our knowledge be; for since human knowledge is nothing else than the perception of the agreement or disagreement, connection or repugnancy of our ideas, those that are simple must determine the nature of those that are complex; those that are complex that of our notions; our notions that of the principles we establish; and that of the principles

ciples we establish that of all the consequences we draw from them. Errour, in any one step of this gradation, begets errour in all that follow: and though we compare ever so exactly, conclude ever so truly, and, in a word, reason ever so well, our reasoning must terminate in errour whenever this happens. It cannot terminate in knowledge. But before I leave this subject, I must go over it again, that I may carry the reflections upon it further.

How inadequate our ideas are to the nature of outward objects, and how imperfect, therefore, all our knowledge is concerning them, has been observed transiently above, and has been too often and too well explained to be over much insisted on by me. That there are such objects, material objects, neither spirits nor ideas, and that they act on one another and on us, in various manners, and according to various laws, no man can doubt, any more than he can doubt of that perception by which he distinguishes their presence and their absence, according to the difference between the ideas they excite in one case, and those he retains in the other. We can doubt of this, I think, no more than we can doubt whether we are free agents, or whether we are necessarily determined to all we do; no more than we can doubt of many other things of which philosophers have pretended to doubt, or have really doubted: for either, they have meaned, on many occasions, to exercise their wit, and to triumph in the

the subtilty of their genius, or they have been transported by overheated imaginations into a philosophical delirium. The first have perplexed knowledge more than they have improved it: and if the last have not made many converts, while they have argued against self evidence, they have multiplied useless disputes, and mispent much time.

Here then, at our first setting out in the survey of knowledge, we find an immense field in which we cannot range, no nor so much as enter beyond the outskirts of it: the rest is impenetrable to us, and affords not a single path to conduct us forward. Could we range in that field, we should be unable to walk in our own. I mean, that if our senses were able to discover to us the inmost constitutions, and the real essences of outward objects, such senses would render us unfit to live, and act in the system to which we belong. If the system was not made for us, who pretend, on very weak grounds, I think, to be the final cause of it, we at least were made for the system, and for the part we bear, among terrestrial animals. Other creatures there may be, and I believe readily there are, who have finer senses than men, as well as superior intelligence to apply and improve the ideas they receive by sensation. The inmost constitutions, the real essences of all the bodies that surround them, may lie constantly open to such creatures; or they may be able, which is a greater advantage still, so "to frame, and shape to themselves organs of sensation, as to suit them to

"their

"their present design, and the circumstances of "the object they would consider," according to that supposition which Mr. Locke calls an extravagant conjecture of his, but which that great man might very reasonably make; since it assumes no more than this, that some other creatures are able to do, by their natural constitution, and so as to obtain full and absolute knowledge, what we are able to do, by art, very imperfectly, and yet so as to attain a greater degree of partial and relative knowledge than our senses, unassisted by art, could communicate to us.

But be this as it will, concerning which we can only guess; it is, I think, evident, that although outward objects make impressions on the organs of sense, and may be said, therefore, to cause sensations, yet these sensations are determined, in the whole animal kind that we know, and to which we belong, according to the constitutions of the several species, as these constitutions are framed according to the uses and ends for which each species is designed, and to which it is directed. Innumerable instances might be brought to illustrate and confirm this truth. It will be sufficient to do so, by making a few short observations on our own species alone. The same outward objects then produce the same sensations in all men, as far as self preservation is immediately concerned: and there is, at least, an apparent uniformity of sensations in all other cases, sufficient to maintain the commerce of men one with another, to direct their mutual offices without confusion,

sion, and to answer all the ends of society. Further than to these purposes, the determination of their sensations does not seem to be in all men the same. The same objects seem to cause different and opposite sensations in many particular instances, in as much as they give pleasure and excite desire in one man, while they give no pleasure, nor excite any desire, nay, while they give pain and provoke aversion in another. All men feel alike the effects of fire that burns, or of steel that divides their flesh; and my butler, who has tasted both, will not bring me a bottle of wormwood wine when I ask for a bottle of sack. But yet the Greenlander quaffs his bowl of whale's grease with as much pleasure as you and I drink our bowl of punch: and if his liquor appears nauseous to us, ours appears so to him. Habit, that second nature, may sometimes account, as well as sickness, for this difference that seems to be in human sensations. But still it will remain true, that this difference, in many and various instances, proceeds from our first nature, if I may say so; that is, from a difference in the original constitution of those particular bodies in which this apparent difference of sensation is perceivable. The principle of this diversity is as unknown to us as the more general principle of uniformity; but whether it be laid in the natural constitution, or in the alterations that habit or sickness may produce, our observation will be verified, that human sensations are determined by the actual disposition, whether original or accidental, of human

human bodies, and cannot, therefore, help to communicate to us any knowledge of the inward constitutions, or real essences of the bodies which excite them, nor indeed any knowledge but of themselves. To discover in what manner and by what powers, external action and internal passion cooperate to produce sensation, it is in vain to attempt: and a philosophical mind will be much better employed in admiring and adoring the Divine Wisdom, that appears equally in the diversity, and in the uniformity of our sensations, as it would not be hard to show, if this was a place for those reflections, than in such vain researches. Vain, indeed, they will appear to be to any man of sense, who considers, with attention and without prepossession, what has been writ on this subject by men of the greatest genius.

But as vain as these researches are, and as impossible as it is to know more of our sensations than that we have them, and that we receive them from outward objects, yet are we not to think the use of our senses as limited as Malebranche would have us believe it to be. They were given, he says*, for the preservation of our bodies, and not to teach us truth. The first part of this assertion is agreeable to the system of nature. The latter is agreeable, I think, to no system but that of his own imagining, which is so extravagantly hypothetical in many, and the principal parts, that it has made no great fortune in the world, though the utmost subtilty of wit, and all the powers

* Recherche de la Verité, L. 1, c. 10.

of

of language are employed to support it. Notwithstanding, therefore, such systems as these, for it is not single of it's kind, we may continue to believe what constant experience dictates to us, that our senses, though few, confined and fallible, are given not only for the preservation of our bodies, but to let into the human mind the first elements of knowledge, and to assist and direct the mind in all the progress it makes afterwards.

That human knowledge is relative, not absolute, has been said already. We neither do, nor can know, the real essence of any one substance in the world, not of our own: and when we talk of the powers and qualities, and sometimes, of the natures of substances, either we talk ignorantly, or we refer to their effects, by which alone we distinguish them, and in which alone we know any thing of them. They who distinguish between the primary and secondary qualities of substances, do not so much as pretend that the secondary qualities, such as colours or tastes, for instance, are any representation of the outward existencies that cause them: and the disputes about solidity, extension, and motion, which is mobility in action, as mobility is motion in power, show how inadequate our ideas are of the primary qualities; though these are said to be resemblances of patterns really existing in all bodies, whether we perceive them or not.

But though the knowledge here spoken of be not complete nor absolute, because our ideas, concerning which alone human knowledge is conversant,

versant, are inadequate to the nature of things; yet is it real knowledge, in some degree, and relatively to us. This I mean. Our simple ideas, whose various coexistences compose all our complex ideas of substances, are certainly adequate in this sense; they are real effects of real powers, and such as the All-wise Author of nature has ordained these powers to produce in us. I say in us, for it is not incongruous to suppose, nor will these ideas be less adequate, nor this knowledge less real, if it be so, that the same powers may be ordained to produce other effects on other creatures of God. This paper gives me the idea that I call white; it may give some other idea to some other creature. These ideas are different, but they are both adequate to our use, and the knowledge real; for they are both real and natural effects of real corresponding powers.

As low as these principles, of any real knowledge that we can acquire of substances, are laid, it is from them we must take our rise: and there is no wonder, therefore, if we proceed slowly, and have not been able to proceed far, even since the study of nature has been pursued in a right method. While the symbolical physics of Pythagoreans and Platonists prevailed, and while natural philosophy was made to consist in little else than a logical cant, which Aristotle invented, and his disciples propagated, errour was cultivated instead of science; ignorance was masked, and men passed for naturalists without any knowledge of nature. The case would be much the same if some

some modern philosophers could have succeeded in establishing a supposed science, that they call metaphysics, to be like a higher ground from which we might descend to physics; from generals to particulars; from speculations about what may be, down to affirmations about what is. But there have been men since the resurrection of letters, at the head of whom our Verulam justly claims his place, who have delivered common sense from the chains of authority, and by exposing ancient, have put us on our guard against many of those modern whimsies. The generality of philosophers, therefore, have been far from adopting this inverted rule, this unnatural method of studying nature. They have seen not only that laborious industry is the price imposed on all our acquisitions of knowledge; but that natural knowledge, the knowledge, I should say, of the system of nature, can never be real, unless it be begun, and carried on, by the painful drudgery of experiment. Extenditur usu.

By experiments well made, for they too may be made ill, these men have acquired a knowledge of some particular substances, of those at least which are nearest to them; which they can handle, and even torture at their pleasure, and force, if I may say so, to give them information. The knowledge I mean is that of the sensible qualities and powers, coexisting in each particular substance: and this is real knowledge, as far as it goes, according to what has been explained above. When a multitude of particular substances

stances are thus known, and thus distinguished, philosophers venture to frame general propositions concerning them, and concerning others too, by the help of analogy: and when the propositions, and the conclusions drawn from them, are confirmed by uniform experience, they acquire a probability almost equivalent to certainty, and which must be accepted for it. This, however, is not strictly knowledge. The naturalist who has made a thousand experiments, with the utmost care and skill; the chemist who has, in like manner, decomposed a thousand natural, and composed as many artificial bodies, are still liable to be deceived; because it may happen, that the action of one particular body shall not produce sometimes the same effects, which the actions of other bodies of the same specific appearance has produced on innumerable trials. Our real knowledge goes no further than particular experiment; and as we attempt to make it general, we make it precarious. The reason is plain. It is a knowledge of particular effects, that have no connection nor dependency one on another, even when they, or, more properly, the powers that produce them, are united in the same substance: and of these powers, considered as causes, and not in their effects, we have no means of attaining any knowledge at all. It may be, that bodies act one on another, according to their bulk, figure, and texture of their solid parts, by motion and pulsion, or gravity and attraction. It may be, that their action proceeds from other causes,

so remote from all human conception, that we are unable not only to guess at them, but even to suspect that they are. But whatever they be, since they are neither known nor knowable by us, what have philosophers to do more than to redouble their industry in multiplying experiments, as much as they have means and opportunities of doing, since there may be a deficiency, but never an excess of them? Thus they may proceed in obtaining knowledge of particular substances, by the help of their senses, and in improving and applying this knowledge to greater advantage, by the help of their intellect. Sense and intellect must conspire in the acquisition of physical knowledge; but the latter must never proceed independently of the former. Experiment is that pillar of fire, which can alone conduct us to the promised land; and they who lose sight of it, lose themselves in the dark wilds of imagination. This many have done, from the infancy of philosophy, which has lasted longer than we are apt to imagine; and whic hone might be tempted to think, on some occasions, continues still, by a fondness to retain some of the rattles and baubles of early ages. These rattles and baubles have been laid aside, however, by no philosophers so much as by those who have applied them to cultivate experimental physics: and therefore as imperfect as our knowledge of nature is, and must be always, yet has it been more advanced within less than two centuries, than it had been in twenty that preceded them.

All

All the helps that human wit and industry can procure, have been employed. Microscopes and telescopes have been invented. Geometry has been applied to natural philosophy, and algebra to geometry. With all these helps, our knowledge of nature has advanced in degree, but not in kind. There are microscopical corpuscles in bodies, as there are telescopical stars in the heavens, neither of which can be discovered without the help of one or the other of these glasses. But with this help, we can no more discover all the corpuscles of any one body, than we can all the stars of the universe: and besides, as to the former, if glasses could magnify enough to expose them all to our sight, we should know, indeed, more component particles of bodies, but we should remain as ignorant of their mechanical affections, as we now are; because we should remain ignorant of the mechanical affections of these corpuscles, or of that inward spring which puts these atoms into motion, and directs their several operations.

As to the celestial bodies, which are objects of astronomical observation, they must be reckoned objects of natural philosophy likewise; since they are parts of the same universal system of nature. We take up the telescope, indeed, and not the microscope, to contemplate them, because they are at such immense distances from us: and we are so little concerned to know of what substances they are composed or what substances they contain, that if we were not hindered by the utter

impossibility, we might be so by the apparent inutility, from attempting to acquire any such knowledge of them, as we labour to acquire of the outward objects, that environ us in our own planet. This planet is our home, and it imports us to know as much as we can of the inward structure and furniture of it. We have not the same concern about other habitations. But it is agreeable, and, in some respects, useful, to know the general face of the country about us. It is probable that mere curiosity begat astronomy: and that, the uses, to which this noble science is applicable, were discovered afterward. I am apt to think, that the first men were excited more to physical researches, by the shining phænomena of the heavens, than by those of the Earth. Their wants forced them to look down; but as the most immediate of these were supplied, they began to look up again: and the men who had least to do, Ægyptian or Chaldean shepherds, perhaps, were the first astronomers. But as mean and rude as the beginnings of it were, astronomy was soon cultivated by the most learned men, and by the greatest princes, if we believe the traditions of antiquity concerning Belus, Atlas, and others, to have had any foundation in the truth of things. Thus much is sure, it has been cultivated many thousands of years; and wherever arts and sciences have flourished, this science has flourished at the head of them.

It is lawful, methinks, to conclude from hence, that a science, which it has been the business of learned

learned men in all countries, where learning has flourished, to advance, would have been brought to a great degree of perfection, if there had been any near proportion between the object of it and human means of knowledge. But as some bodies baffle our inquiries, and escape our knowledge, by being too minute, these enormous masses do the same, by being too remote. Our sense of sight fails us; and when our senses fail us in natural philosophy, whose object is actual not possible existence, our intellect is of little use. It may be said, it will be said, that our knowledge of the heavenly bodies is brought to a great degree of perfection, and is going on daily to a greater, by the incessant labours of many learned men; that we have a much more extensive, a more exact, and a truer view of the phænomena than ever, by the vast advances that have been made in every part of mathematics; that we calculate their magnitudes, measure their distances, determine their figures, describe their orbits, compute the degrees of their velocity, and perform a multitude of other operations concerning them, the result of every one of which is knowledge, with the utmost accuracy. It will be added, that we are not only thus able to account for appearances, but that we penetrate into the physical causes of them; that we discover the forces by which these bodies act on one another, the laws of their motion, and of their direction, by which the order and harmony of the whole system is governed and maintained.

This may be said, and more to the same effect, without contradiction on my part; for it is true in the main, truer than panegyric is generally. But still I apprehend, that when we consider the whole matter, as it must be considered to make a true estimate of the extent of this knowledge; that is, when we compare the objects of this science with the progress that has been made in it by the united labours of mankind, we shall find much more reason to admire the industry and perseverance of philosophers, than to applaud their success. What do we know beyond our solar system? We know, indeed, just enough to give us nobler and more magnificent ideas of the works of God, than ancient philosophy could suggest. We know that this system, to which our planet belongs, and beyond which men did not carry their thoughts anciently, nor suspect any other, is but a minute part of the immense system of the universe, of the τὸ πᾶν, as you Greeks, I think, call it. But as to any particular knowledge that we have, or even imagine that we have, it is next to nothing. Well may we be thus ignorant of all the solar systems beyond our own, the very phænomena of which, except the twinkling of some of their suns and our fixed stars, are imperceptible to human sight; when there are so many phænomena in our own solar system for which we cannot account, and so many others, probably, that we have not yet discovered; when there are, even in that of the Earth we inhabit, so many things that have hitherto escaped the utmost

most penetration of our senses, and the utmost efforts of our intellect, with all the assistance that art can give to both. We cannot trace the course of comets, for instance, through all their oblique orbits: but can we trace the circulation of water that falls on our earth in rain, or that rises in springs? "Veniet tempus," says Seneca, in the seventh book of his Natural Questions, "quo ista, "quæ nunc latent, in lucem dies extrahet; et; "longioris ævi diligentia, veniet tempus, quo pos-"teri nostri tam aperta nos nescisse mirentur." This time may come, perhaps; but if we judge of what is to come, by what is past, we may be tempted to think, that the revolution of the Platonic year will be complete as soon.

The progress of a science, which, like this of natural philosophy, is the work of ages, must be liable, as it has been and will be, to various interruptions. The ground that has been gained will be frequently lost. The latest systems or hypotheses may not be always the truest: and when they are so, the advancement of science may not be accelerated by them as much as it has been retarded by those that were false. In a word, I do not believe that Seneca would be so much surprised if he rose from the dead, as we may imagine, at the progress that has been made since his days. What further progress will be made depends on many contingencies, and it is hard to say. But this is sure, that although knowledge acquired facilitates the acquisition of more, to a certain point, yet the progress we attempt to make

beyond that point grows more and more difficult, and becomes, a little sooner or a little later, quite impracticable; for nothing can be truer in physics, as well as in those general reasonings which are called metaphysics, than what Montaigne has said, "les extrémitéz de notre perquisition tom-" bent toutes en éblouissement."

Let us carry these reflections one step further, and we shall have carried them as far as is necessary, to show how little we are fitted to acquire the knowledge to which we aspire, and which we sometimes pretend that we have, concerning bodies either terrestrial or celestial. To investigate truth with success, in mathematics, in natural philosophy, and, indeed, on every occasion where it is difficult to be found, the analytic method must be employed, not only in the first place, but as far as it can be employed about the objects of our inquiry. It has been much improved, and it has been thus employed, by the moderns. Many of them have been careful to make all the observations and experiments in their power, and from them they have drawn general conclusions by induction. This now is the utmost that our nature, and the nature of things without us, admit to be done: and when it is so well done, that no objection, drawn from experience, can be made to these conclusions, they have a right to be placed in the rank of things known by us. But let us not be mistaken. Though this be human, it is not absolute knowledge; because it is not founded in

abso-

absolute certainty. Further discoveries of the phænomena may contradict these conclusions: or, supposing no such discoveries to be made, other conclusions may be deducible from the same phænomena, or other causes of them may be assignable, for aught we know. So far is this method of reasoning, from particular observations and experiments to general conclusions by induction, from amounting to real demonstration, though it be the best in our power.

This is the case when the minds of men are bent solely to the discovery of truth. But something worse happens when human affections and passions mingle in their inquiries, as they often do; for philosophers are not free from them. The Stoics themselves, with all their boasted apathy, were as little so as any other men. When this happens, philosophers hasten too much from the analytic to the synthetic method, that is, they draw general conclusions from too small a number of particular observations and experiments: or, without giving themselves even this trouble, they assume causes and principles before established, as if they were certain truths, and argue from them. Nothing can be more absurd than these proceedings. It was agreed, I think, out of the Schools at least, that Aristotle was eminently guilty of them; for he dealt more in common notions than experiments, and built a world with categories; that is, by a certain logical arrangement of words: and yet even Aristotle seems to have warned philosophers against this abuse; for

he

he taught, according to the report of Sextus Empiricus, that they should not neglect sense and seek for reasons, " posthabito sensu quærere ra- " tionem;" that is, that they should not carry speculation further than experiment and observation authorise it first, and confirm it afterward. The principal reasons of a contrary conduct may be found in laziness, and vanity; in the first sometimes, in the other always. Philosophers have found it more easy and more compendious to imagine, than to discover; to guess, than to know. They have taken, therefore, this way to fame, which has been their object, at least, as much as truth; and many a wild hypothesis has passed for a real system.

Strato was a famous philosopher, the scholar of Theophrastus and the master of Ptolemy Philadelphus. As little and as ill as we are informed of the state of natural philosophy among the more ancient naturalists of Greece, such as Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Democritus, and others, whose names are preserved, though their works are lost, we know enough of Plato and Aristotle, whose works have been preserved, perhaps more to the detriment than to the advancement of learning, to determine what the state of it was in the days of Strato. We know, that it was no longer the study of nature by observation and experiment; but that it consisted in a jargon of words, or at best in some vague hypothetical reasonings: and yet Strato, who could not have told the Ægyptian king how the idea of purple, the colour of his robe,

robe, was produced, pretended to account for all the phænomena, and among other doctrines, to establish that of the plenum; for he laughed at the vacuum, as well as at the whole atomical system of Democritus.

Hypotheses are much in the favour of some philosophers: for there have been many Stratoes even among the moderns. But hypotheses may be employed without being abused. In all our attempts to account for the phænomena of nature, there will be something hypothetical necessarily included. The analytic method itself, our surest road to science, does not conduct us further than extreme probability, as it has been observed; and this probability must stand us in lieu of certainty. But when we cannot arrive by this method at such a probability, is it reasonable to make an hypothesis? Is it reasonable, when we cannot draw, from observation and experiment, such conclusions as may be safe foundations on which to proceed by the synthetic method in the pursuit of truth, to assume certain principles, as if they were founded in the analytic method, which have been never proved, nor perhaps suggested by the phænomena, in hopes that they may be so afterward? In a word, when the only clew we have fails us, which is most reasonable, to stop short, or to push forward, without any clew at all, into the labyrinth of nature? I make no scruple of deciding in a case so plain, that it would be a silly affectation of modesty, not modesty, to hesitate. When the phænomena do not point out to us any sufficient reason

reason why and how a thing is as we discover it to be, nor the efficient cause of it, there is a sufficient reason for stopping short, and confessing our ignorance; but none for seeking, out of the phænomena, this reason and this cause which we cannot find in them. This is learned ignorance, of which the greatest philosophers have no reason to be ashamed. "Rationem—harum gravitatis "proprietatum ex phænomenis nondum potui "deducere, et hypotheses non fingo," said our Newton, after having advanced natural knowledge far beyond his contemporaries, on the sure foundations of experiment and geometry. How preferable is this learned ignorance to that ignorant learning, of which so many others have foolishly boasted? Descartes, who mingled so much hypothetical with so much real knowledge, boasted, in a letter to his intimate friend, the minime Mersenne, "that he should think he knew no-"thing in natural philosophy, if he was only able "to say how things may be, without demonstrat-"ing that they cannot be otherwise." Leibnitz, who dealt in little else than hypotheses, speaking, in his reply to Bayle's reflections on his pre-established harmony, of the ridiculous whimsy of his monades, and the rest of his metaphysical trash, compares himself to Antæus; asserts, that "every objection gives him new strength:" and boasts, vainly, that he might say, without vanity, "omnia præcepi, atque animo mecum antè "peregi."

It will be urged, perhaps, as decisive in favour of

of hypotheses, that they may be of service, and can be of no disservice to us, in our pursuit of knowledge. An hypothesis, founded on mere arbitrary assumptions, will be a true hypothesis, and therefore of service to philosophy, if it is confirmed by many observations afterward, and if no one phænomenon stand in opposition to it. An hypothesis, that appears inconsistent with the phænomena, will be soon demonstrated false, and as soon rejected. This reasoning, which is the sum of all that can be said for them, will not hold good, I think, in either case, enough to countenance the abuse of them, which is made by the very persons who urge this plea in favour of them. That such an hypothesis may be true, is within the bounds of possibility; because it implies no contradiction to suppose, that men, who pass their lives in guessing, may guess sometimes right. A man may throw ten sixes with ten dice; but no man in his senses would lay that he did, nor venture his stake on such a chance. In the other case, it is true, that an hypothesis inconsistent with the phænomena may be soon demonstrated false. But it is not true, that it will be as soon rejected. If philosophers are fond of making hypotheses, their disciples are as zealous to defend them. The honour of a whole sect is thought to be engaged, and every individual is piqued, that another should show that to be false, which he has all his life taken to be true; so that, notwithstanding all the graces of novelty, a new truth will have much to do to dislodge an old errour.

Instances

Instances of this sort are innumerable. Let us produce one from astronomy itself.

If any hypothesis was ever assumed with a plausible probability, that which we call the Ptolemaic was so. The apparent face of the heavens led men to it. We may say, that the phænomena suggested it; and that the revolution of the sun, planets, and stars, in several spheres round the earth, could scarce be doubted of by men who assumed any general conclusions, instead of drawing them all from a long course of particular observations carefully and learnedly made. The plausibility of this false hypothesis, and the authority of the Peripatetic School, established it on the ruins of the true system, which Pythagoras had brought long before into Italy, from the east, and which was probably that of the Egyptian and Chaldean astronomers. False as it was, it maintained it's credit thirteen or fourteen centuries, if we reckon only from the time of the Alexandrian astronomer Ptolemy to that of Copernicus. Many difficulties had occurred, but as fast as they did so, new assumptions were made to reconcile them, till the whole became one complicated heap of hypothesis upon hypothesis. It was banished at last, and a truer system took it's place. The fautors of hypotheses would have us believe, that even the detection of their falsehood gives occasion to our improvement in knowledge. But the road to truth does not lie through the precincts of errour, and the improvement of astronomy was not owing to the destruction of the Ptolemaic hypothesis; but the destruction of this

this hypothesis was owing to the improvement of astronomy. If this hypothesis had never been made, Copernicus would not have had the honour of reviving the Pythagorean system; but mankind would have had the benefit of pursuing, without interruption, a system founded on knowledge, instead of pursuing, during an interval of so many centuries, an hypothesis founded on assumption.

To this ancient, let us join a modern instance, to suggest the same reflections, and confirm the same proofs. The system of Descartes dazzled and imposed at first. It was soon attacked, however, but it has not been so soon defeated. No man, perhaps, was ever so fit as this philosopher to make and maintain an hypothesis; to assume, and to improve and defend his assumptions. The notion he entertained and propagated, that there is, beside clear ideas, a kind of inward sentiment of evidence, which may be a principle of knowledge, is, I suppose, dangerous in physical inquiries as well as in abstract reasoning. He who departs from the analytic method, to establish general propositions concerning the phænomena on assumptions, and who reasons from these assumptions afterward, on inward sentiments of evidence, as they are called, instead of clear and real ideas, lays aside, at once, the only sure guides to knowledge. No wonder then if he wanders from it. This Descartes did very widely, in his construction of a world; and yet, by dint of genius, he gave a great air of simplicity and plausibility to his

his hypothesis, and he knew how to make even geometry subservient to errour. It proved in other hands, indeed, the instrument of detecting his errours, and of establishing truer principles of natural philosophy. He furnished to others arms against himself; among the rest, to our Newton: for though the system of the latter be no more owing to the hypothesis of the former, than that of Copernicus to that of Ptolemy, yet was it the application of geometry to physics, that enabled the British philosopher to make so many admirable discoveries: and the introduction of geometry into physics must be acknowledged due to the French philosopher. To conclude, by bringing this example to our purpose. The plenum of Descartes is well nigh destroyed; many of his laws of motion are shown to be false; the mills that served to grind his three elements are demolished; and his fluid matter, in which, as in a torrent, the planets were carried round the sun, while a similar motion in the particular vortex of every planet impelled all bodies to the centre, is vanished. Notwithstanding all this; how slowly, how unwillingly, have many philosophers departed from the Cartesian hypothesis? They have had recourse to the most forced suppositions to defend it; and when it has been demonstrated false in one of the principal parts, in that of his fluid matter, whose rapid circulation he supposes to cause the fall of bodies and the motion of the planets, and which he invented to explain these phænomena, we shall be told very gravely, that some

some fluid matter or other may, however, in some manner or other, be the cause of these phænomena. It is even ridiculous to observe the same men tenacious of an hypothesis neither deduced from the phænomena, nor consistent with them, and averse to receive, or, at best, extremely scrupulous about receiving, a system built on observation and experiment, not on assumption, and which all the phænomena conspire to establish.

If philosophers meaned nothing more than the discovery of truth, they would confine themselves to those rules, by which alone, and to those bounds of inquiry, within which alone, we are able to discover it. But a predominant principle of vanity makes them break these rules, and pass these bounds. Not content with philosophical liberty, they affect to proceed licentiously: and it is this affection that makes them so fond of hypotheses, by the means of which, how imperfect soever their knowledge is, their pretended systems are still complete. Thus it has happened, that natural philosophers have filled their works with fictions, and, like lying travellers, have given descriptions of countries through which they never passed. They have done even more, they have affected to reveal the secrets of courts they never saw. This I mean; they have not only supposed existences that never existed, but have presumed themselves able to give a sufficient reason for every thing that does exist. Leibnitz, who had much knowledge and some sagacity, but too much pretended subtilty and real presumption, imposed

this obligation on philosophers, the obligation of adulterating physics with metaphysics. Thus, for instance, he thought himself obliged to give a sufficient reason how and why the extension of body, or body according to the Cartesians, becomes possible; for though actuality may, he denied that possibility could proceed from the will of God. He found this reason neither in sensible extension, nor in the insensible atoms that compose body. But he found it happily in his monades; that is in simple, unextended beings, that are the only substances, and that compose all extension, which God could not have created if he had not created them first. Is it worth while to acquire the name of a great philosopher, at the expense of amusing mankind with such hypothetical extravagancies? Surely not.

Since I have ventured to censure Descartes on this head, on which he was very liable to censure, I think myself obliged to justify him on another, on which he has been accused very unjustly. Strato might be an atheist for what I know, though mention is made, in the catalogues of his works preserved by Diogenes Lærtius, of three books that he wrote concerning the gods. But the passage in the Academics of Tully, where it is said, that he did not employ the gods in making the world, "negat operâ deorum se uti ad fabricandum mundum," will not persuade me that he was so. Nothing can be more consistent than to acknowledge a Supreme Being, the source of all existence, the first efficient cause of all things, and

and to account for the phænomena by physical and mechanical causes, by matter and motion. This Descartes therefore endeavoured, and might endeavour to do, without forfeiting the character of a good theist. Philosophers might very reasonably object to his hypothesis, but divines had the less reason to do so; because, beside proving the existence of the self-existent Being, by an argument which he thought good, and which has been urged as decisive by Malebranche and others, the very foundation of his doctrine rests on these principles, that God created matter, and that he impressed two motions on the parts of it. But my Lord Bacon, a much better apologist than I am, had obviated the objection made to Descartes long before this philosopher had writ, in the third book of the Augmentation of Science: and the passage is so considerable, that I will dwell, with your leave, a little upon it.

This great author, then, was so desirous to keep metaphysicians in countenance, by keeping metaphysics in the rank of sciences, that he resolved at any rate to give them an object. As such he assigned the doctrine of formal causes: and indeed if he had admitted the forms of Plato, forms intirely abstracted from matter, these would have been imaginary objects in his scheme of some science more sublime than physics. But these he rejects deservedly, as theological speculations that infected and corrupted the whole of Plato's natural philosophy: so that he left himself no forms to establish as objects of metaphysics,

but such as must be discovered, if they are to be discovered, by physics; which he himself admits in effect, when he says, that we may discover them if we turn our eyes to action and use; that is, to the action and use of substances, whose forms are the species of things; and which he confirms, I think, by the examples he brings to explain this inexplicable doctrine, or rather unattainable science. In default of this, that the learned Chancellor might provide some object for metaphysics, he established the inquisition or research of final causes, as a second. He should not be much concerned, he says, if the order of this research, that he would place among metaphysics, and that has been placed usually among physics, were alone concerned. Now here I venture, with fear and trembling, but I must venture, for the love of truth pushes me on, to differ from this great man. The order according to which the doctrine of final causes is confined to the known physical province, instead of being translated to a metaphysical region, appears to me not only useful, but necessary to be preserved, as well to advance real knowledge, as to prevent errour, both philosophical and theological. The more we proceed in the study of nature, under the conduct of experimental philosophy, the more discoveries we make and shall make of the infinite wisdom as well as power of it's Author. The structure of the parts, the design and harmony of the whole, will be matter of perpetual astonishment, and ought to be a motive

tive to the most devout adoration of that supreme and incomprehensible Being; of God, the maker and the preserver of the universe. I said the harmony and design, as well as the structure; for beside the admirable contrivance which appears in the bare structure of all the bodies, animal bodies especially, that surround us, as well as of our own, when we contemplate them without any regard to their distinction, wants, or uses, there appears something still more admirable when we contemplate them in these respects. Sometimes we can discover neither efficient, nor final cause; sometimes, but more rarely, both. Sometimes we discover the former, and the latter escapes our inquiry. Sometimes, again, the final cause is more obvious than the efficient, as in one of the instances brought by my Lord Bacon: for surely this final cause, that eye-lashes were given to shadow and defend the eye, is much more evident than the efficient cause he assigns, or any other, perhaps, that can be assigned. But in all cases where such discoveries are made really, they are made by physical researches. When we proceed in the investigation of them, by the help of experimental philosophy, we put ourselves under the conduct of God, who leads us, by the knowledge of his works, to the knowledge of himself. But when we abandon this method, and pretend, by the strength of our intellect, to arrive at superior science, we put ourselves under the conduct of

imagination, the worst guide a philosopher can choose, and never so seducing nor so dangerous as in the brightest genius. This remark is abundantly confirmed in general by the experience of all ages*.

For

* It comes into my thoughts to mention, upon this occasion, another opinion, which casts a ridicule on all religion. If we are able to collect any truth from our observations on the mundane system, beside that of a self-existent and intelligent first Cause of all things, it is that of final Causes. The certainty we have of these makes part of the demonstration of the other, and is the sublimest and most important speculation in which natural philosophy can terminate. I say terminate, because the absurdity of those philosophers, who, in the course of their inquiries, assigned final instead of physical causes, has been already exposed. The abuse which those who profess theology, in all religions, make of final causes, is of another kind; and may serve as a further example of the fantastical and profane notions which men assume hypothetically, when they carry their reasonings about spirit and spiritual things, without regard to what experience might teach them, up to the divine nature and œconomy.

Mankind, in general, esteem their species to be the final cause of the whole creation, and each society or sect of men is instructed to esteem itself a principal, if not the sole, object of Providence. On this foundation even they, who never observed, perhaps, any of the numberless and astonishing instances of order, contrivance, and design, which are obvious in the constitution of things, ascribe and instruct others to ascribe, every event that is produced, in the ordinary course of nature, to extraordinary interpositions of God's immediate and particular providence, just as they may be strained to suit prejudice, interest, vanity, and passion. I need not bring examples in proof. They will occur to you fast enough, to show

For these reasons, which might be greatly extended and enforced, I cannot subscribe to the partition of science which our famous Chancellor makes on this occasion. They who have no pretensions to be esteemed natural philosophers, profit in their several professions of the discoveries which these philosophers make about efficient causes.

show how a doctrine, that should increase our admiration of God's infinite wisdom and power, and enliven all the acts of adoration that we direct to this incomprehensible Being, plunges men, by the abuse they make, and a wrong application of it, into errour and superstition. It is errour proportioned to the comprehension of every mind, and to the vanity of every heart. It prevails, therefore, easily; and spreads from the highest down to the lowest ranks of men. If the ridiculous question, which Seneca puts in his book concerning Providence, "nunquid hoc quoque à Deo aliquis "exigit, ut bonorum virorum etiam sarcinas servat?" had been put to your parish clerk, he would have answered, I doubt not, with much holy assurance, in the affirmative; and would have inserted, among his anecdotes, some special examples of wallets and bundles providentially saved or recovered. The Stoics are ridiculed, in Tully's Academical Questions, for having low notions of the Divinity, and such as supposed among the gods a worker like Myrmecides, who was famous in his time, as well as one Callicrates, for making bees, and flies, and ants, and other small insects, in ivory. The joke was unjustly applied, as far as it was applied to this general position, that nothing could be without God, "cupis "quidem vos majestatem deducitis," says the academician, "usque ad apium, formicarumque perfectionem: ut etiam "inter Deos Myrmecides aliquis minutorum opusculorum "fabricator fuisse videatur." This joke on the Stoics was unphilosophical and silly. But what advantage would this academician have taken over them, if he could have laid to their charge, not only that they made God the immediate

causes. Just so divines, or they who call themselves metaphysicians, may profit of those which the same philosophers make about final causes: and when they do so in such a manner as to create and maintain in the minds of men a due awe and reverence of the Supreme Being, these discoveries will be productive of the best, and noblest effects; far from being barren, like virgins consecrated to God, as the Chancellor expresses himself, rather prettily than truly. "Causarum "finalium inquisitio sterilis est, et tanquam "virgo Deo consecrata nil parit." But still there will be as little reason to advance, that the investigation of final causes is a part of metaphysics or of theology, as there is to say, that the investigation of efficient causes is the object of every profession wherein some knowledge concerning them is employed.

Now, though I cannot subscribe to this partition of science, nor think the order in which the research of final causes is placed at all indifferent, yet I subscribe most readily to all that is said in the same place against those who substitute final in lieu of efficient causes. Both are objects, but distinct

author of the least as well as of the greatest productions in nature, but that they made him the efficient cause of every immoral sentiment and action? He would have had then a large field, indeed, wherein to exult, "in quo possit ex-"ultare oratio." But the Stoics, as absurd and as superstitious as many of their opinions were, gave him no such advantage. He must have waited till our age, to have had such a monstrous opinion as this to combat among the pro-
fa of theism.

distinct objects of physics, and nothing can tempt men to confound them but a sort of laziness and vanity. By one they are led to decline some trouble, and by the other to hope to conceal their ignorance. We shall not be at all uncharitable, in assigning such motives to the two philosophers, who have distinguished themselves by this proceeding, in which they have been followed, as in other absurdities, by numbers. Plato had a luxuriant imagination, and a great flow of words. It cost him, therefore, much less to invent final causes, and to expatiate theologically upon them, than it would have done to pursue the discovery of efficient causes by the slow and painful course of experiments. Aristotle had great subtilty of genius, and the same ambition that made him think, like an Ottoman prince, to use my Lord Bacon's simile, that he could not reign securely, unless he put all his brethren to death, made him think too, that he ought, at any rate, to maintain his pretensions to universal knowledge. For this purpose he perplexed what he could not explain; and, in the instance before us, he discoursed logically about final causes, to conceal his ignorance of the efficient. I should be unwilling to warrant any fact on the authority of Justin Martyr, on whom the idlest tales were able to impose; but the bare report that ran in Greece concerning the death of this philosopher, who was said to have drowned himself in the Negropontic current, for shame that he had not discovered the cause of it, may serve to show, that the character he has at this

this day is that which he had in his own age and country. Upon the whole, it may very well be, that Democritus and others, whether atheists or theists, who gave, or seemed to give, no place to God, nor intelligence, in the production of the phænomena, nor made any mention, by consequence, of final causes, but applied themselves wholly to the discovery of material efficient causes, might penetrate, for that very reason, deeper into natural philosophy than they could have done, if they had recurred often to the wisdom and power of God, like Plato; to those of nature, like Aristotle; and to final causes, like both. This might be, and my Lord Bacon who thinks so, and who approved this method of pursuing the study of physics, prepared, therefore, an apology for Descartes, long before this philosopher wanted it.

There is a passage in Plato which I shall have occasion to quote, in another place, and to another purpose, where Socrates, after reading a treatise of natural philosophy which Anaxagoras had writ, sneers at him, and complains, that he who ascribed the structure of the universe to a Supreme Mind, laboured so much in the explanation of material, instead of discoursing about final causes. This passage would prove beyond dispute, if any proof was wanting, that Plato introduced, or supported, at least, by the authority of Socrates, the absurd custom of substituting final intentional causes in the place of mechanical and material; and that philosophers, who were

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as good theists as himself, though they did not affect so much theology, pursued the study of nature in the same method as the materialists, though they asserted an intelligent First Cause, which the others denied.

The truth is, that neither these philosophers, nor even the others, could proceed in the investigation of material causes, without discovering sometimes the intentional, final causes of things; because the latter are often, though not always, so plainly pointed out by the former, that he who does not see them must shut his eyes on purpose. When they are not thus plainly pointed out, it is vain presumption to pretend to account for them: and Socrates would have had no reason to complain, if a naturalist, a stranger to Athens, looking at him in his prison, and seeing him fettered and chained, had shown how it came to pass, that he could not walk, and that he could sit, without presuming to determine why he was there.

To conclude and wind up this Section; there is no study, after that of morality, which deserves the application of the human mind so much as that of natural philosophy, and of the arts and sciences which serve to promote it. The will of God, in the constitution of our moral system, is the object of one. His infinite wisdom and power, that are manifested in the natural system of the universe, are the object of the other. One is the immediate concern of every man, and lies therefore within the reach of every man. The other does so too, as far as our immediate wants require, and far enough to excite awe and veneration

tion of a Supreme Being, in every attentive mind. But further than this, a knowledge of physical nature is not the immediate and necessary concern of every man; and therefore a further inquiry into it becomes the labour of few, though the fruits of this inquiry be to the advantage of many. Discoveries of use in human life have been sometimes made; but these fruits, in general, consist chiefly in the gratification of curiosity. Their acquisition, therefore, is painful: and when all that can be gathered are gathered, the crop will be small. Should the human species exist a thousand generations more, and the study of nature be carried on through all of them with the same application, a little more particular knowledge of the apparent properties of matter, and of the sensible principles and laws of motion, might be acquired: more phænomena might be discovered; and a few more of those links, perhaps, which compose the great immeasurable chain of causes and effects that descends from the throne of God. But human sense, which can alone furnish the materials of this knowledge, continuing the same, the want of ideas, the want of adequate ideas, would make it to the last impracticable to penetrate into the great secrets of nature, the real essences of substances, and the primary causes of their action, their passion, and all their operations; so that mankind would cease to be, without having acquired a complete and real knowledge of the world they inhabited, and of the bodies they wore in it.

SECT. II.

Having now said all that occurs to me at present, concerning our complex ideas of substances, whose archetypes are without us; I proceed to take some further notice than has been yet taken by me, of our other complex ideas and notions, which are said to have their archetypes within us, and which may be said, I think, more properly, in the same sense, to be archetypes themselves. Nor is this the sole difference, by which they are distinguished from the former. Those of substances are received by the mind in it's passive, these are formed by the mind in it's active state. They are framed by the mind as the mind has need of them; and, therefore, on no subjects so much as on those that regard the thoughts, the opinions, the affections, the passions, and the actions of mankind. The archetypes of our ideas of substances exist, whether our minds perceive them or not. These being archetypes themselves, and having no existence out of the mind, have no permanent existence any where, not even in the mind; for there they exist no longer than while they are the immediate objects of thought. They cease to exist, when they cease to be perceived. But the mind, having once made them, can recall them into being, and employ them to facilitate the acquisition and communication of knowledge. It is true, indeed, and it has been observed already, that nature seems to obtrude,

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or obtrudes even the complex ideas of modes and relations upon us, as well as those of substances. But still there is a plain difference between the two cases, which must be a little more, and more precisely, developed, than it has been in the Second Section. Both are lessons, but different lessons of nature. Sense alone is immediately concerned in one, whether we receive by it the first impressions of outward objects, or whether we correct and determine the ideas these impressions have given us. But intellect is immediately and principally concerned in the other. Intellect serves in the use and application of ideas acquired by sense, but has no share in framing them. Intellect, on the other hand, has always an immediate and principal share, and is sometimes alone employed, in framing our complex ideas and notions of modes and relations. Thus, for instance, to mention a simple as well as a mixed mode; when we observe certain terminations of finite extension, or certain proceedings of men to men, the lesson of nature does not consist in this, that these are patterns by which, and according to which, the ideas or notions we speak of are framed, without any share taken by the mind except that of perception; but it consists rather in giving hints, if I may say so, which are vague, and neither determined nor classed, like our ideas of substances; and the mind, taking these hints, frames, by the exercise of it's discerning, compounding, and comparing faculties, these ideas or notions. The terminations of extension, that

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are seen by us, produce ideas, no doubt; but I choose on this occasion to design them as hints, because they do not so much give, as suggest the ideas which the mind frames by considering these terminations of the extreme parts of extension, both distinctly and relatively. Confused appearances of this sort strike the senses; but the ideas of particular figures, as well as the general notion of figure, may be framed independently of these sensations by the mind. In like manner, an action which we see performed, as in the case of killing mentioned above, gives an idea, no doubt; but this idea, in the respect in which it is considered here, is nothing more than a hint to the mind, that passes from a bare perception of the action to contemplate all the circumstances of it, and all the relations both of the action, and of the actors; and so frames, by reflection, without the concurrence of sensation, ideas and notions of another kind, both particular and general. This is the great intellectual province, wherein our minds range with much freedom, and often with exorbitant licence, in the pursuit of real or imaginary science. We add ideas to ideas, and notions to notions; and by considering the habitudes and relations of all these, we acquire, at length, such a multitude as astonishes the mind itself, and is both for number and variety inconceivable.

When we take such a general view of human knowledge, and represent to ourselves all the objects that our minds pursue, and in the pursuit whereof

whereof we pretend not only to reason on less or greater grounds of probability, but most commonly to demonstrate, we are apt to entertain a high opinion, and to make extravagant encomiums of our intellect. But when we enter into a serious and impartial detail concerning this knowledge, and analyse carefully what the great pretenders to it have given and give us daily for knowledge, we shall be obliged to confess, that the human intellect is rather a rank than a fertile soil, barren without due culture, and apt to shoot up too much with tares and weeds. By such combinations of ideas as I have been mentioning, we shorten and facilitate the operations of our minds, as well as the communication of our thoughts. Our knowledge becomes general, and our intellect seems to be less dependent on sense. From which observations philosophers have entertained false notions of what they call pure intellect, and have flattered themselves that they could extend their knowledge, by the power the mind exercises in framing complex ideas and notions, very far beyond the narrow bounds to which it is limited by simple ideas, over which the mind has not the least original power, and which must, therefore, let the mind compose, combine, and abstract them as it pleases (for it cannot make any) determine the extent of our complex ideas and notions.

But, beside the limitations imposed on the mind by the human constitution, there is another which we ourselves must impose on it, if we desire to combine our ideas and our notions so as

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to obtain, by their means, real and useful knowledge. It is the more necessary to insist on this limitation, because philosophers have not only neglected it too much in practice, but endeavoured to establish opinions inconsistent with it. Observe the chain of these opinions. The human mind is a participation of the divine mind, or an emanation from it, or something very analogous to it. The essences of things do not depend on God; for if they did, things might be possible and impossible at the same time, according to his will, which implies contradiction. The divine intelligence is the scene of all things possible: but though the divine will be the source of actuality, it is not so of possibility. Possibility and impossibility are fixed natures, independent on God. The knowledge of things possible, independently of their existence, is absolute knowledge. The knowledge of things actual, in consequence of their existence, is relative knowledge. The human mind is capable of both. Philosophers may, therefore, contemplate the intelligible natures, the fixed and unalterable essences of things, whether the will of God determines them to actual existence or not. Philosophers may reason, therefore, not only from their own system, that of actuality; but from God's, that of possibility. These opinions, some of which are nearly true, others of which are absolutely false, and all of which are liable to much abuse, have been advanced: and these, and others of the same kind, are the necessary foundations of the

most sublime metaphysics. Let us descend from such imaginary heights; place ourselves on the human level, and consider from thence what this part of human knowledge is, concerning which we are now to speak, and from whence and how it arises.

It has been observed, in speaking of that part of natural philosophy which contemplates substances, that we must never lose sight of experience, if we aim at acquiring real knowledge. But we may go further, on as good grounds, and affirm, that the same rule must be followed in that other part of natural philosophy (for such it is, if it be any thing) which contemplates mind; and in all our general or abstract reasonings about moral or other matters. I am far from saying that we should not reason about things possible, as well as things actual, or that we should exclude every thing hypothetical out of our reasonings. I know too well, that probability is our lot oftener than certainty. But this I say, that we should never reason about the first, except under the direction of the last, and much less in contradiction to the last. God's knowledge precedes all existence. All existence proceeds from his knowledge and his will. He made things actual, because he knew them; and why should I not say, because he made them possible? But we poor creatures should not be able to guess at things possible, if we did not take our rise from things actual. Human knowledge is so intirely and solely derived from actual Being, that without

out actual Being, we should not have even one of those simple ideas whereof all the complex ideas and abstract notions that turn our heads are composed. These complex ideas and abstract notions, to be materials of general and real knowledge, must have a conformity with existence. They must be true, not in an idle metaphysical sense, that they are really what they are; but in this sense, that they are true representations of actual, or of such possible existence, as experience leaves us no room to doubt may become actual.

That this is agreeable to the common sense of mankind, undebauched with philosophy or superstition, the universal practice of mankind may serve to convince us. The human mind is able to frame many complex ideas and abstract notions, to which no names have been assigned in any language, because they have not been brought into use among any people. Many other complex ideas and abstract notions have names assigned to them in one language, and are in use among one people, and have no such names, nor are in any such use among another. What shall we say is the reason of such obvious matters of fact? The reason appears to me to be plainly this. Men are determined to frame these complex ideas and abstract notions by the want of them: and the want they have of them arises from hence, that they observe certain combinations of beings, of actions, of modes, and relations to exist, relatively to which they could nei-

ther think, discourse, nor act, all which it is often either their inclination, their interest, or their duty to do, unless they applied their minds to the framing of such ideas and notions. Men form, therefore, no where, complex ideas and notions of combinations of this kind, which they have observed to exist no where as in the first case. Nor do they form them always where such combinations do exist; though they are not enough observed to have the want of these ideas and notions perceived, as in the second case. These ideas and notions are so necesary to the improvement of knowledge, that as we proceed in acquiring and communicating it by the employment of some, so the knowledge we acquire makes it necessary in every step we advance, to frame and to employ more, that we may proceed further.

It is reasonable to believe, that the first of men had framed no ideas, nor notions of jealousy, envy, anger, malice, treachery, and murder in Paradise, nor perhaps out of it, before Cain slew Abel. Then, no doubt, he framed all these, and those of assassination and fratricide beside, and invented words to signify them, as he had invented names for all the beasts of the field and fowls of the air, when they passed in review before him. Since the days of Adam, and his unhappy fall, as the number and the iniquity of his posterity increased, so has their experience: and therefore legislators, and the founders of commonwealths, and all those who have civilized and instructed mankind, have been careful to observe the

the behaviour and the dealings of men with one another in the same, and in different societies. They have remarked the circumstances and the consequences of every action, relatively to the happiness and unhappiness of mankind. Those of one sort have been termed virtues, those of the other vices: and as these virtues and vices have arisen, and have offered themselves to observation, the same persons, political and moral philosophers, have proceeded in determining complex ideas or notions of them, and in marking the several combinations by distinct names, in order to promote the practice of virtue, and to restrain vice, by improving the natural sanctions of rewards and punishments.

Thus then the principles of the law of nature, and of civil jurisprudence, have been collected à posteriori, by experience and observation: and the same method should be taken in every part of philosophy, though I have insisted particularly on this alone. We should not suffer, much less encourage, imagination to rove in the search of truth. To know things as they are, is to know truth. To know them as they may be, is to guess at truth. Judgment and observation guide to one, imagination and speculation to the other. To know them as they are, the mind must be constantly intent to frame it's ideas and notions after that great original, nature; for though these ideas and notions are properly and usefully framed by the mind, that they may serve as archetypes by which we reason, and according to which we

judge, yet must all the parts of them be taken from nature, and no otherwise put together than nature warrants. As well may the painter copy the features of a face on which he never looks, by pure guess, as the philosopher frame his ideas and notions of nature, physical and moral, by pure intellect. One may draw a metaphysical man, and the other invent a metaphysical hypothesis. But the features of the picture, and the ideas and notions of the system, being taken from imaginary, not real existence, the picture will be the picture of nobody, and the system the system of nothing. Nay, there is still a worse consequence that follows often, because it is almost unavoidable. Imagination submitted to judgment will never go beyond knowledge founded on experience, or high probability immediately deducible from it. But when imaginations naturally warm, and excited by a strong desire of being distinguished, break loose from this control, though the possible man, and the possible system may be so composed as to contain nothing absolutely impossible, yet they may contain something monstrous, like those productions wherein nature deviates from her regular course. Whenever this happens, and it has often happened in philosophy, it must not be deemed a jot less absurd to take these ideas and notions for real archetypes, or the system they compose for a system of real knowledge, than it would be to take such monstrous productions for the archetypes of any species.

This

This proceeding is the more dangerous, because we may accustom our minds to contemplate chimeras till they grow familiar to us, and pass for realities. After which we shall not fail to reason from them, and to control even what is, by what imagination has told us may be. The very reverse should be our practice. All that we imagine may be, should be compared over and over with the things that are: and till such a comparison and analyse has been well and sufficiently made, all argumentation is impertinent. We can frame ideas of a centaur, or a hippogryph. No contradiction is implied by ranking them among possible beings. We can show wherein these complex ideas agree and disagree. We can reason, frame propositions, affirm, and deny concerning them; but yet every man who is not out of his senses will confess, I suppose, that these ideas are fantastical, and that it is, therefore, absurd to reason about them. They are fantastical, because their supposed archetypes do not exist. The reasoning about them is absurd; because it is absurd to reason about substances that are not actual, though they may be possible.

But I ask, is it a jot less absurd to frame ideas and notions of mixed modes and relations, any otherwise than experience shows us that nature warrants to do. Mr. Locke has observed truly, that "mixed modes are made for the most part "out of the simple ideas of thinking and motion, "wherein all action is comprehended, and out of "that of power, from whence we conceive all

" action to proceed." Now if this be so, is it not evident, that mixed modes, how much soever mixed, are resolvable, and should be analysed into ideas less complex, and these ultimately into simple ideas? Is it not evident, that whether we consider intellectual or corporeal agency, whether we frame mixed modes of powers as modifications of thought and motion, or whether we consider them only for want of being able to do more, in the actions they produce, is it not evident, that we must have recourse on all these occasions to existence, existence of powers and actions, or of actions at least?

The example of power and action, which I employ in speaking of mixed modes, is equally applicable to the case of relations, among which that of cause and effect is one of the most considerable, as it is the relation concerning which the mind of man is the most curious to acquire knowledge. All our ideas of relation are framed by the comparison the mind makes of one idea with another: as these ideas, therefore, are fantastical or real, so our ideas of their relations, how justly soever the mind makes the comparison, are in effect fantastical or real too. The comparison, therefore, must be not only that of ideas with ideas, but that of ideas with the objects of them, with things. This recourse to existence is so truly the only sure rule by which we can frame our ideas in such a manner as to make them proper materials of real human knowledge, at least, that it is, I suppose, a mistake most commonly when

when we are thought to frame fantastical ideas of relations, by a wrong comparison of real ideas. I suppose we shall find on such occasions, if we observe closely, that the fantastical idea of relation does not arise so much from a wrong comparison of real ideas which the mind contemplates, as from a voluntary or involuntary corruption of the reality of these supposed real ideas.

I say voluntary, or involuntary, because philosophers are apt to make complex ideas and notions of all kinds, not only wantonly, but unfairly. These ideas and notions should be composed in order to assist the mind in forming opinions, or acquiring knowledge. But it is obvious to observation, that men begin very often by forming strange opinions, or by taking them on trust; and afterwards put together inconsistent and inadequate ideas, which they suppose to be both consistent, and adequate, in order to frame such ideas of mixed modes and relations, as may help them to impose, or defend their opinions with some appearance of plausibility. The mind wanders easily; and is easily, more easily led into errour about modes and relations, than about substances: and errour about the former may be concealed better, and defended more plausibly by metaphysical chicane, than about the latter. Let us keep our minds, therefore, constantly intent on those criterions which our physical and moral systems hold out to us: and if by surprise, inadvertency, or prepossession, we have been led too far from them, let us return to them as to the oracles of truth.

For

For want of doing one or the other, into what extravagant opinions, under the specious names of metaphysical or theological science, have not men been carried. You give us philosophy in a poetical dress? You adorn, but do not disguise, and much less corrupt the truth. There are who have given us mere poetry in a philosophical dress: and, I think, you must admit, that Plato, Malebranche, and a good friend of ours, to instance in none of inferior note, are as truly poets as Homer and you. In a word, the boasted power of framing complex ideas, and abstract notions, will be found, as it is exercised, to be so far from showing the great force and extent of human intellect, and from raising men up to divinity, that it will show, on the contrary, how weak and how confined this intellect is, and sink him down, if you will allow me such an expression, into that animality above which he affects so vainly to rise.

This now, whereof we have taken some view in several of it's branches, is that noble fund of ideas from whence all our intellectual riches are derived. The mind of man does often what princes and states have done. It gives a currency to brass and copper coined in the several philosophical and theological mints, and raises the value of gold and silver above that of their true standard. But the success of this expedient is much alike in both cases. In different sects, as in different states, the imposition passes; but none are the richer for it.

One great advantage that has been reaped since the resurrection of letters, and since the improvements

ments of modern philosophy, in the study of nature, intellectual and corporeal, has been this, that men have discerned their ignorance better than they did in the days of ignorance, and that they have discovered more and more of it, as they advanced in knowledge. A great part of this discovery is that of the limitation, as well as imperfection, of our simple and complex ideas and notions. Limited and imperfect they are, no doubt; and yet it would be well for us, if they had no other defect. Another, and, on many occasions, a greater belongs to them; for, even in the narrow compass to which they extend, they are apt to fluctuate and vary: so that beside the difficulty of determining them well, there is that of preserving the determination of them steadily in our minds. He who is attentive to do so, must acknowledge the difficulty he finds of this sort, even in his private meditations. But the difficulty increases vastly when he is to communicate these ideas and notions in discourse or writing, and above all, if he is obliged to enter the lists of disputation.

Our complex ideas being assemblages of simple ideas, that have often no other connection except that which the mind gives them, we might be easily led to conceive the difficulty of this task by a bare reflection on the weakness of memory, and, if I may say so, on the seeming caprice of this faculty, before we were made sensible of it by repeated experiences. The ideas that are lodged there begin to fade almost as soon as they are framed. They are continually slipping from us,

or

or shifting their forms: and if the objects that excited some did not often renew them, and if we had not a power to recall others before they are gone too far out of the mind, we should lose our simple, and much more our complex ideas; and all our notions would become confused and obscure.

The mind would be little more than a channel through which ideas and notions glided from entity into nonentity. But our case is not so bad. They are often renewed, and we can recall them as often as we please. There is, however, a difference between the renewing of them, and the recalling of them. When ideas are renewed by the same objects that excited them first in the mind, they are renewed such as they were. The light and heat of the sun will cause the same sensations, and stronger, perhaps, of the same kind, in the man who has not seen one nor felt the other in many years, than they caused in him formerly. Just so any operation, or affection of the mind, which has been long unperceived, will appear the same it used to appear to our inward sense, when it is perceived anew by reflection. But when we are forced to recall our complex ideas, the case is not the same, at least, when they are such as are not in common use. Those of mixed modes and relations, for instance, that philosophers sometimes employ, and to which the mind scarce ever adverts on other occasions, may well receive some alteration even when they are recalled readily, though this alteration is the less perceptible, perhaps, on account of that very readiness with which they are recalled. But when they are recalled with dif-

difficulty, and dragged back slowly, as it were, and by pieces and parcels into the mind, it is no wonder if they receive much greater alteration. They are then in some sort recompounded, and though this may be for the better as well as for the worse, yet still they vary, and every variation of them begets some uncertainty and confusion in our reasoning. Thus it must be, when beside our simple ideas, such numberless collections of simple and complex ideas, and such numberless combinations of all these into notions, are to be held together, and to be preserved in their order, by so weak a mental faculty as that of retention.

Names, indeed, are given to signify all our ideas and all our notions to ourselves and to others, and to help the memory in meditation as well as in discourse. When they are assigned to complex ideas, they are meant as knots, according to the very proper image Mr. Locke gives of them, to tie each specific bundle of ideas together: and, in these respects, they are not only useful, but necessary. It happens, however, that names, far from having these effects, have such very often as are quite contrary to these. While we retain the names of complex ideas and notions, we imagine that we retain the ideas and notions; but the ideas and notions shift and vary, while the names remain the same. The scene of the mind, like a moving picture, must be governed with attention, that it may bring into our view the images we want, and as we want them. Otherwise ideas that are foreign to our actual train of thinking will frequently

quently rush into our thoughts, and become objects of them whether we will or no. But there is another and a greater mischief, which will flow from this constitution of the mind, unless the utmost attention be employed, and often when it is. The former is a sort of violence, which cannot be offered unperceived, and may be therefore resisted. This that I am going to mention steals so silently upon us, that we do not perceive it very often even when it has worked it's effect. When we recall our ideas and notions, whether this be done with ease or difficulty, we review them in some sort: and if they are more liable to have been altered, we have a better chance for perceiving any alteration that may have been made in the determination of them. But when the ideas and notions we want present themselves, as it were of themselves, to the mind, under their usual names and appearances, we are apt to employ them without examination, and, perhaps, we advert very often to nothing more than the word by which we are used to signify them. In this manner our ideas and notions become unsteady imperceptibly, and I would not answer that something may not happen to me of this kind, even in writing this Essay, though I am on my guard against it. How much more must it happen to those, who are not thus on their guard?

Every man imagines that his ideas and notions are his own in every sense, but every man almost deceives himself in this case. When we learn the names of complex ideas and notions, we should ac-

accustom the mind to decompound them, as I believe it has been observed already; that we may verify these, and so make them our own, as well as learn to compound others. But very few are at this trouble, and the general turn of education is contrived to keep men from taking it. Bred to think as well as speak by rote, they furnish their minds, as they furnish their houses, or clothe their bodies, with the fancies of other men, and according to the mode of the age and country. They pick up their ideas and notions in common conversation, or in their schools. The first are always superficial, and both are commonly false. These are defects in the first determination of our ideas and notions, and if we join to these the obstinacy and negligence that become habitual in most men, we shall find no reason to be surprised, that absurd opinions are tenaciously embraced, and wildly and inconsistently defended. Uniformity of ideas in errour would have, at least, this advantage: errour would be more easily detected and more effectually exploded.

But supposing the contrary of all this, supposing our ideas and notions to have been determined truly, and preserved steadily, we must not flatter ourselves, that we are quite secure against the evil consequence, that is observed in this place to flow from the imperfect constitution of the human mind. The very temper of the mind, a little too much remissness, or a little too much agitation, affections that are grown up, or passions that are inflamed, may occasion some alte-

ration in our ideas and notions, in the very moment that we employ them. If it be small, it will be unperceived by us. If it be great, the affection or passion that caused it will excuse it, perhaps justify it to us. But however small and almost imperceptible, even to a cool mind that is on it's guard against it's own weakness, such alterations may be, each in itself; yet beside that, each of them may produce others, each of them, though small in the idea, or notion, may become of great consequence in the course of that reasoning, wherein this idea or notion is frequently employed, or which turns, perhaps, upon it. A few ideas, or parts of ideas, that slip out of the bundle of covetousness, make it the bundle of frugality: and a few, added to that of frugality, make it the bundle of covetousness.

Thus it happens when we discourse with ourselves. But when we discourse with others, the difficulty doubles; for beside that of maintaining a steady determination of our own ideas and notions, we have the additional difficulty very often of communicating, and always of maintaining the same steady determination in those of another. This is our case; that of every one in his turn, not only when mixed modes and relations, but in some degree, even when substances are our objects; and I persuade myself, that you have been more than once ready to laugh or cry, in the midst of several rational creatures, who talked of things quite different, called them by the same names, and imagined that they talked of the same things.

things. The choirs of birds who whistle and sing, or scream at one another, or the herds of beasts who bleat and low, or chatter and roar at one another, have just as much meaning, and communicate it just as well. At least I presume so, for I can affirm of no species but my own. All of them seem to have ideas, and these seem often to be better determined in the birds and beasts, than in men. All of them seem to have, in these loud conversations, some general meaning. But none of them seem to have that precision, order, and connection of ideas and notions, which can alone make up rational discourse.

Such is the common conversation, such the ordinary correspondence of men with one another. Such too, for the most part, are all the public discourses that are held, and the solemn harangues of the pulpit. But the matter grows still worse when any controversy is concerned. Though truth be one, and every necessary truth be obvious enough, yet that there must be various opinions about it among creatures constituted as we are, is as certain as that there are such opinions. Truth, however, is seldom the object, as reason is seldom the guide; but every man's pride, and every man's interest, requires that both should be thought to be on his side. From hence all those disputes, both public and private, which render the state of society a state of warfare, the warfare of tongues, pens, and swords. In that of the two first, with which alone we have to do here, disputes become contests for superiority be-

tween man and man, and party and party, instead of being what they should be, comparisons of opinions, of facts and reasons; by which means each side goes off with triumph, and every dispute is a drawn battle. This is the ordinary course of controversy, not among the vulgar alone, but among sage philosophers and pious divines, whose conduct is not more edifying than that of the vulgar. Will it be pretended that the schools of religion and learning have, in this respect, any advantage over other public assemblies, over coffee houses and taverns? If it is, we may safely deny it; because we can easily prove the contrary. In vain will it be urged, that men who have much learning, and who are accustomed to investigate and to fix the most abstruse and momentous truths, must of course, and even without superior parts, be better able nicely to discern, to determine, and to compare and to connect ideas and notions, than those who neither possess the same learning and the same habits, nor have the same art of reasoning. This may be, in some respects, true; but upon the whole it is not so: and a plain man would overwhelm the scholar who should hold this language, by showing, in numerous instances, the weakness of the human mind, that of this very scholar perhaps in some; the narrow confines, and, in them, the instability of our ideas and notions, the impertinence of logic, the futility of metaphysics, the blasphemy of divinity, and the fraud of disputation.

The best, and even such as pass for the fairest controversial

controversial writers, improve by artifice the natural infirmity of the human mind, and do on purpose what is here lamented as an evil not always to be avoided. They confound ideas, and perplex the significations of their signs, so as may serve best the intention, not of discovering truth, but of having the last word in the dispute. This practice is so common, and especially where favourite interests, and, on their account, favourite tenets, are concerned, that I think no writing of this sort can be produced, wherein it is not employed, more or less, on both sides. How, indeed, should it be otherwise, when skill in disputation is esteemed a great part of learning, and the most scandalous frauds are applauded under the name of subtilty? Whatever excites men to it, whether pride or self-interest, or habitual and inveterate prepossession and bigotry, by which they are induced to think, that the worst means may be employed to serve the best cause, which is always the cause they have embraced, it is fraud still. It is pious fraud, if you please: I would rather call it theological; but the doctor who shifts the idea, and keeps the word appropriated to it, that he may serve any purpose, is as arrant a cheat as the saint who interpreted the same passage of Scripture in different senses, according to the different opinions his orthodoxy required him to oppose. We may lament the imperfections of the human mind; we may blame those who do not give their attention to frame, and to preserve their ideas and notions with all

the exactness necessary to make them materials of knowledge, not of errour. But we have a right to abominate those who do their utmost to render the discovery of truth impracticable, to perpetuate controversy, and to pervert the use and design of language. I prefer ignorance to such learning, Swift's bagatelle to such philosophy, and the disputes of a club where it does not prevail, to those of an academy or university where it does.

It is, in truth, in those places, and wherever metaphysics and theology have been made sciences, that the arts of controversial legerdemain are practised with most licence, dexterity, and success. Ideas of corporeal substances are not so liable to vary, nor so exposed to perplexity and confusion by the abuse of words, as the ideas that we have, or rather that we suppose we have, of thinking substance. Every complex idea of any corporeal substance is not the same precise collection of simple ideas in every mind. But the most sensible of it's qualities, those that are the most obvious to us according to the business we have with it, such as mark most and distinguish enough, are put together in every mind. The peasant has not the same idea of gold as the miner, nor the miner as the chemist. This will be said, and it will be so far true, that the chemist will have more ideas of qualities coexisting in this metal than the miner, and the miner more than the peasant. But the collection of simple ideas in the mind of him who has fewest

fewest will be ample, and distinct enough to fix the sort there, and to answer all his purposes: and as long as nature maintains these collections of sensible qualities, the ideas of them can be neither confounded nor lost. As long as gold, and iron, and men, and horses are in the world, their complex ideas will exist in human minds invariably: and though they may be more complex in some than in others, yet the additional ideas, that increase, will not alter the collection enough to beget any material ambiguity.

The case is widely different when thinking substance becomes the object of our contemplation; when philosophers pretend, by a supposed science, not only to spiritualize matter in some sort, if you will allow me to express myself so, and to consider forms abstracted from all matter, incorporeal essences, and intelligible natures: but to reason and dogmatize about immaterial spirits; and to make souls, for instance, as many as they want, souls for the world, for men, for all other animals, and for vegetables; souls rational and irrational, souls immaterial, and souls of so fine a texture, that they approach immateriality, though they are material. All such ideas and notions, and all such as are framed concerning them, are ill determined, and consequently ill preserved. Uncertain in their origin, they must needs be unsteady in their progress, and in the use that philosophers and divines make of them. Our ideas of corporeal substances are, no doubt, inadequate and superficial, and such as cannot reach the essence of

any one particular substance; but they reach far enough for our use: and as far as this use is concerned, nay, even a little further, the system of corporeal substances lies open to us. They are criterions in our power; and according to them we verify, correct, and maintain, by observation and experience, as we acquire, the precise determinations of our ideas of them. But when we proceed from physics to that which is called metaphysics, and pretend to knowledge of general natures and immaterial beings, what do we less than pretend to general knowledge, where we are not capable of having even particular knowledge, properly so called? and to particular knowledge, where we have no criterion sufficient to verify, correct, and maintain all the ideas and notions that we put together, in order to compose something that passes for it? The sole criterion we have of immaterial spirit is our own spirit. The idea we have of thought by reflection is as clear, as that we have of extension by sensation. The ideas we have of some few modes of thinking are as clear, as those we have of numberless modes of extension. So far then we have a criterion, by which to judge of the immaterial spirits we are pleased to create. I call them the creatures of metaphysics and theology; because in truth, considered as distinct substances, they are such. All spirits are hypothetical, except the Infinite Spirit, the Father of Spirits, the Supreme Being. But how confined is this criterion that extends no wider, nor rises any higher than the narrow confines,

wherein

wherein we have perceptions of the operations of our own minds? They afford much room for imagination, and few means of knowledge. Our ideas of knowledge and power, for instance, that arise from the perceptions we have of our own spirits, are applicable to them, and triable by them. But as soon as metaphysicians and divines presume to apply them improperly, to reason concerning the knowledge of the Supreme Being on those of the first sort, which have in this application no criterion; and to reason concerning the liberty of man on those of the second sort, without a due regard to what we experience in ourselves, which is their true criterion; how vague, and how unsteady do all these ideas, and these notions we frame by them, become? Of how much incoherent discourse, of how many repugnant opinions, has not this absurd manner of philosophizing been productive? In a word, and to conclude this subject; here, at least, all our metaphysical and theological ideas and notions are vague and unsteady as well as fantastical, for the most part, for want of criterions by which it is in our power to try them in the subjects about which we employ them, or for want of trying them by the criterions by which it is in our power to try them.

These inconveniencies the lovers of truth may easily avoid. We are under no obligation to be metaphysicians or divines. But there is another inconveniency not so easy to be avoided on subjects more important, because more real than

those commonly called metaphysical and theological. The inconveniency I mean to speak of here, and have referred to already, consists in the difficulty of preserving steadily some of our ideas and notions when they are well determined, rightly taken from the nature of things, and tried and approved by their proper criterions. Mathematical, as well as moral ideas and notions, are made by the mind; and though suggested to it by sensible objects, yet both are properly creatures of the mind, and there they remain to be employed as archetypes. Thus far both are in the same case. But the difference that follows is great in itself, and in it's consequences. The mathematician can call his senses in at every instant to aid his intellect; and by making his ideas become objects of his sight, as he does when he draws diagrams that are copies of them on paper, he not only pursues steadily, but is able to communicate to others, demonstrations which he could neither pursue nor retain by the strength of his mental faculties alone, nor explain to others by the help of words. Words are signs, not copies of ideas. An idea, a moral idea for instance, may be essentially changed; and the sign that stood for it before may stand for it afterward, without causing always an immediate perception in the mind of this change. But whenever the least change is made in any idea of which we have before our eyes an outward visible copy, that change is perceived instantly; and the determination of ideas, which the mind is unable to maintain, is thus

main-

maintained by one of our senses. Moral ideas and notions, therefore, of which no such copies can be made, which are held together in the mind, with the names assigned to them, by nothing but the retentive power of the mind, and which can be signified by nothing but sounds that bear no resemblance to them, must fluctuate and vary, beget all the confusion, spread all the obscurity, and give occasion to all the fraud I have mentioned.

Definitions, it has been said, will prevent or remedy this evil, and morality may be placed by the help of them "among the sciences capable "of demonstration." That the first and great principles of natural religion may be demonstrated, and that ingenuous minds may be trained to make a just application of them in some particular cases, I acknowledge. But that the precise meaning of moral words can be so fixed and maintained, that the congruity or incongruity of the ideas and notions they stand for shall be always discerned clearly and uniformly, I do not believe. Definitions, therefore, consisting of words, they cannot answer Mr. Locke's purpose, as it would not be hard to show, in the very instances he brings. Intellect, the artificer, works lamely without his proper instrument, sense; which is the case when he works on moral ideas. Whenever he can employ this instrument, and as far as it can serve him, which is the case when he works on mathematical ideas, he works securely. I apprehend, therefore, that to expect a new method

method should be ever found, of preserving as steadily and invariably our moral ideas and notions, as we preserve those that are mathematical, is not very different from expecting, that a method should be found, some time or other, of rendering things, that are not objects of sight by nature, visible by art. Ideas and notions of virtue and vice, very clearly defined, have been often confounded by schoolmen and casuists, in the most flagrant cases. They are so still by them and others in most discourses, and in all disputes about political or moral affairs. But no mathematician ever confounded the idea of any triangle with that of a square, nor that of a square with that of a circle.

SECT. V.

I have dwelled the longer on complex ideas and notions, because, though simple ideas are truly the first principles of all our knowledge, yet the complex ideas into which they are compounded by nature, and the complex ideas and notions into which we compound them by the operations of our minds, are the more ready and immediate principles on which we endeavour to establish general knowledge. We could not attain it even in such degrees as are proportionable to our wants, and to the design of Infinite Wisdom in making us what we are, in placing us where we are, and in giving us the faculties we have, without their assistance. If then these ideas and notions

notions are so limited, as I have described them, by nature, and if we must often limit them still more by judgment, that they may be still more surely productive of real knowledge; if within this extent, too, they are so liable to be inaccurately framed, unsteadily maintained, and uncertainly communicated, there will result from these considerations sufficient reasons to confound the pride of philosophers, and to expose the vanity of much pretended science. But these reasons acquire still greater force, when we add some further considerations to the former. The lesson of nature, as I have called it, that is, the information and instruction we gain by observing the constitution of our physical and moral systems, and the state and course of things that exist constantly, or transiently in them, ends with our complex ideas and notions. When nature leaves us, we are forced to put ourselves, in our ulterior progress towards general knowledge, under the conduct of her mimic, art: so that if our feet are apt to slip, if we totter in the way, and are subject to ramble out of it, while nature is our guide, all this must needs happen much more when we have no other guide but art, and when we are reduced to supply natural imperfection by expedients. The truth is, the further we proceed under the conduct of art, the further we attempt to carry our thoughts beyond those originals whereby nature, obtruding on sense complex ideas of what does exist, and suggesting ideas and notions of what may exist, informs and instructs the mind, the more liable we

are

are to fall into errour, by framing our ideas and notions wrong, by preserving unsteadily even those that we frame right, by presuming that we have ideas when we have really none, or that we know what we mean when we have no meaning at all. Metaphysicians and divines have raised their reputations on little else: and it will be worth our while to examine the truth of this assertion in some few instances, among many that might be produced. I say it will be worth our while, because the errours in opinion, like the faults in conduct of the greatest men, are of the worst consequence, and deserve the most to be detected; because these philosophers, above all other men, have rendered the human mind the flatterer, the deceiver, and the debaucher of itself, "blanda "adulatrix, et quasi lena sui." In short, because they have substituted mental artifice in the place of mental art, and have thereby encouraged mankind to continue ridiculously an imaginary progress in search of science, when nature and art are both at a stand.

How difficult, nay how impracticable the enlargement of knowledge, and communication of our thoughts to one another would be, if we remained absolutely confined to particulars, and unless means were found of supplying this defect, is obvious to reflection. The mind, therefore, makes it's utmost efforts to generalize it's ideas, begins early with such as are most familiar, comes in time to those that are less so; and is never at rest till it has found means of conceiving, as well as it can, it's

it's ideas collectively, and of signifying them in that manner to others. Complex ideas are made by uniting several simple ideas that have often no connexity, nor relation to each other, except what the mind gives them, in one idea. General ideas, or notions, are attempted by endeavouring to assemble in one a variety of ideas, or notions, that have a relation, or likeness to each other. Nature helps in the first of these operations, as we have observed above; and we perform it, or we may perform it, with success. But she affords us little or no help in the last; and we fail in the attempt. She shows us men, but not man in general, and the same may be said of all other substances; she shows us, or we frame, ideas of particular figures: but neither does she show us, nor can we frame any idea of figure in general, nor general ideas of particular kinds of figure, any more than we can frame a general idea of substance, or of any particular kinds of substances. Once more, she shows us particular actions, and instances of behaviour of men towards men, or we frame ideas in our minds of such particular actions, or instances of behaviour, and we term them just, or unjust; but neither does she show us, nor can we frame any idea of moral or immoral in general, no nor any general idea of these particular kinds, just and unjust. The mind would make all these creatures if it could; but not having this natural power, an art is properly, and usefully employed, to make particular ideas serve the purposes of general, by giving them the rank of archetypes in the mind, and to make particular

ticular notions become general, by comprising them in definitions that we refer to as to archetypes of particular kinds. Thus knowledge, particular by nature, becomes, in some degree, general by art.

It would be absurd to imagine, as some philosophers have imagined, that nature casts her productions in certain specific moulds. But we may say, when we speak of things as they appear to us, that they are classed in different sorts, which we distinguish by our sensations. Our simple ideas are many, as many as the sensible qualities of outward objects that excite them in us. But the various combinations of these simple into complex ideas of substances are innumerable, and yet each of these combinations is as distinctly and uniformly perceived by us, as the simple ideas contained in it. By this it is, and without this it could not be, that both of them answer God's design, and man's use. If mankind in general did not receive the same impressions, and, by these impressions, the same sensations from outward objects, much confusion and disorder would arise in human life. Without troubling ourselves to inquire, like Malebranche *, whether the same motions of the fibres are constantly produced by the same objects, or whether the same sensations are constantly produced, and the same ideas excited in the soul by the same motions of the fibres, of all which he knew no more than such ignorant men as you and I are; let us content ourselves

* Recher. de la Verité, lib. 1. c. 13.

to

to understand this uniformity as it has been explained in the Third Section, and conformably to experience.

This being established, we may observe further, that the mind proceeds to generalize, in the utmost extent, the simple ideas it has got, though not the complex ideas of substances; as if, the component ideas being generalized, men had perceived there was no need of generalizing the complex ideas compounded of them, and of something whereof they had only an obscure idea suggested to the mind by all their sensations, an idea of substance wherein the sensible qualities producing simple ideas inhered. In the case, therefore, of simple ideas we employ, to speak the language of philosophy, not only concrete but abstract terms; and we say, for instance, not only that milk or snow is white, but we talk of whites in general, and signify them by the abstract term whiteness. The adjective white, joined to a substantive, is the sign of a particular idea, and necessary, therefore, as well as proper, to be used in speaking of particular substances, by every one of which it is determined. But the substantive whiteness is authorised by custom alone, and is determined by nothing. It is a term invented by the art of the mind. When it is used, I perceive no determinate, specific, general idea, wherein all the various tints of white which I have perceived, and many there may be which no human eye has ever perceived, are comprehended. I have no perception of a general idea of white abstracted from every par-

ticular idea of this sort. The idea I have, when this word is used, is always that of some particular white extension, or of several such, whose ideas rush confusedly into the mind together.

In the case of substances, the art of the mind is not carried quite so far, though it makes as we grow up, by observation and experience, some attempts of this kind towards general knowledge. The child who prattled of papa and mama, of Crop and Tray, advances in years, and talks of man and woman, of horse and dog, and soon after of animal. He learns certain common names, by which he signifies beings that appear to him alike, and give him nearly the same complex ideas. He learns another common name still more comprehensive, by which he signifies things that do not give him, even nearly, the same complex ideas; but that are confined, however, to the same class by some peculiar, simple ideas, and contradistinguished by them from every other class, more or less. The words man, or animal, raise in his mind no general idea; but, in this case, as in the former, some particular idea of man, which the mind can frame without thinking of Alexander, or Henry, rises there, and becomes representative of all men in general: or else several ideas of men, and other animals, rush confusedly into the mind together; that is, so rapidly, that though they are truly successive, yet this succession is imperceptible. Thus far the art of the mind is carried towards a general knowledge of substances, and custom has authorised it no further

ther. The schools indeed invented, among many other words to which they had no clear nor determinate ideas annexed, those of humanity and animality. Now if nothing more had been intended by those words than to signify, by one sound, all that we understand when we speak of the apparent natures of men and animals, such as they appear to our senses, I cannot see that they deserved to be rejected, and I shall make no scruple to use them as the occasion of doing so presents itself. But if they are employed by any profound ontosophist, as they were by the schoolmen, who pretended to have such general ideas abstracted from all particulars, ideas of general natures and real essences of substances; they deserve to be rejected as much as the gobleity and fableity of Plato, with which the cynic made himself so merry. Even the general names of simple ideas of sensation can be received, according to my apprehension, in no sense but the former; and whiteness, if we assumed that we had such a general idea, abstracted from all particulars, and adequate to the real essence of white, would deserve to be exploded as much as humanity and animality. All these words must be confined to their proper use, and not applied to any other signification. In the first case they will be subservient to an art, in the latter to an artifice of the mind.

The same caution that is to be had, when the mind generalises it's simple and complex ideas of substances, is to be had, and the same distinction

is to be made, between general and abstract ideas, in the sense in which the latter are supposed by some philosophers to be framed by the mind, when we employ words to signify our ideas of modes and relations. We say, for instance, not only that certain figures are triangular, but we discourse of triangularity. We say not only that such an action is just, but we discourse of justice. We say not only that such things are similar or alike, but we discourse of similitude or likeness. We have not, however, any ideas of such general natures, abstracted from all the particular ideas that we suppose to be comprehended in them. These words, triangularity, justice, likeness, recall to the mind some particular idea or notion of each sort, or else a confusion of particular ideas or notions, as was said in the case of substances. They excite no other idea nor notion. But yet the difference between the two cases is vast. Our ideas and notions of modes and relations, being creatures of the mind, though we are unable to frame any that are not particular in their several kinds, and have, by consequence, in our minds no idea nor notion, abstracted and distinct from all the particular ideas and notions that the mind has framed of every kind; yet the real essence of each particular being the particular idea or notion that the mind has framed, we are able to ascertain by definitions, and to reduce into propositions, a general nature; of which every particular idea or notion does, and must partake, to be of that kind, that is, to be

be what it is. I do not know, and therefore I cannot define, nor advance propositions concerning substance in general, nor the real essence of any particular substance; nor, by consequence, the manner in which, and qualities by which they produce the simple and complex ideas I receive from them; nor, finally, the conformity, if any such there is, between all these ideas and their archetypes. But I know, and can define the real essence of all triangles; which I name triangularity. Though I have no idea of triangularity "abstracted with pains and skill from the several species "of triangles, and present to the mind independently of them;" yet I know that this definition, "a space included by three lines that meet at "three angles," contains in it the real essence of every particular triangle whereof I have the idea. A philosopher may take as much pains as he pleases to abstract from those particulars wherein the species differ, and to retain those only wherein they agree, which Cudworth calls the cutting off chips, as I remember; though he frames, by this method, the definition I have mentioned, yet neither he who framed it, nor his scholar who learned it, will be able, I presume, to consider a "space included by three lines that meet at "three angles," without having some particular triangle in his mind. If we had an abstract idea of triangularity, properly so called, it might be said to be the idea of all triangles; but it could not be said, as it has been said, to be the idea of none. In short, we define the general nature of

triangles on the consideration of particular triangles: and this definition is a true proposition in abstract consideration, though it be not an abstract idea. But to make it of any use, we must descend to particular knowledge again; that is, to particular, real ideas, which might have been pursued though the terms of this definition had never been invented.

Thus again, I know the general nature, the real essence of justice, and am able to define it in very clear propositions, though I am not able to frame any general idea or notion of it abstracted from all particulars, and containing them all. It is not, most certainly, to do as we would be done by; for that is more properly a definition of benevolence, than of justice, as every one, who considers the constant force and the occasional injustice of self-love must admit. But it consists in a disposition to give to every one what is his own, where there is property; to deal by others according to the natural fitness or unfitness of things, where there is no property; and in other distinct notions, which altogether amount to a definition, if we may be said to define, when we only enumerate particular notions, and we can do nothing more when we set about to explain the general nature of justice; for which I may appeal to every man who has meditated well on this subject. To conclude; I know the general nature and the real essence of likeness, and am able to explain it by a very short definition; for it consists in that relation which arises from a uni-

formity of appearance in things that are distinct in existence. But still I have no general idea nor notion of this relation, abstracted from all my particular ideas of things so related *.

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* These disputes about abstraction may be deemed after all, perhaps, to be purely verbal. A loose determination of the word idea may have given occasion to them. A proper distinction between ideas, and notions, may help to reconcile them. These two words are commonly used by inadvertency and habit, or authority, as if they were synonimous. Mr. Locke, and even his antagonist in this dispute, the Bishop of Cloyne, have used them so. I have done the same in all I have writ to you. But I think that the example before us shows how necessary it is to distinguish them, in order to maintain a philosophical precision of terms.

The word idea should, I presume, be held to signify one single perception of the mind, whether simple or complex; whether produced by the impressions of outward objects, or by the operations of our own minds, by sensation or reflection. These ideas are preserved in the memory by frequent repetitions of the same impressions, and the same operations. But those of them which can be painted, as it were, on the canvas of the mind, like single objects of internal sight, and like pictures of the original impressions which were made on it, or of the original forms which were raised in it, are best preserved, and most steadily determined. They are all particular, and have no generality but that of application. They represent to the mind that which does or may exist. Of that which neither does, nor can exist, we can have no idea. The ideal man, or the ideal horse, which the mind perceives, is a particular idea, that represents all the men, and all the horses that exist, or ever did exist; and the ideal triangle is as truly a particular idea, that represents all the triangles that exist, or can exist in the mind, or out of it. The mind, indeed, has a power of varying, without destroying the idea; for

What advances now do we make in general knowledge by this expedient which the art of the

instance, it adds wings to the man, and to the horse; one becomes an angel, the other a hippogryph: and, as it can represent the ideal man to be white or black, crooked or straight, so it can represent the triangle to be rectangle, oblique, equilateral, equicrural, or scalenon. Thus far the mind can generalise it's ideas, and I think myself sure that mine can generalise them no further. But when we have been accustomed to call every thing an idea, that is an object of the mind in thinking, we fall easily into that confusion of language, whereby men are led very often, as I apprehend that they are in the present case, to dispute, and to mean the same thing. We might avoid it, I presume, if we distinguished between ideas and notions; if we conceived the former to be particular in their nature, and general only by their application, and the latter to be general in their nature, and particular only by application; and, in short, if we considered how notions succeed ideas, and how they become the immediate instruments of general knowledge, when these can be such no longer. Particular ideas of actual, or possible existence, are made general in some sort, that is, in their effect, as it has been said, and as it is allowed on all hands. But the power of generalising ideas is so insufficient, that it goes no further. We make one phantasm of a man stand for all men, and one of a horse for all horses; but here our progress by ideas, that is, by single perceptions of the mind, stops. We have none of humanity, nor of horseity, and much less have we any of animality. Just so the phantasm of a particular triangle stands for every triangle of that species, but we have no idea of triangularity, and much less of figure. We make a particular stand for a general idea in this case, as in the two former; but, in no case can we make ideas that are particular, and that can represent only what does, or may exist, become ideas of general natures that cannot exist. There is, however, a great difference between cases of the former, and cases of the latter kind. The essences of substances are absolutely unknown

the mind has invented? Not such as philosophers would have believed, but some however. Though we cannot by any power of the mind frame ideas of general natures and essences, which neither do nor can exist separately from particulars, yet it is some advance to be able to comprehend, under one consideration, a great number of particulars,

known to us, but the essences of complex modes are perfectly known, so that we have clear and distinct notions, though we cannot have clear and distinct ideas; nor, indeed, any ideas at all of them. From the contemplation of particular triangles we collect a notion of their general nature. We do more; by contemplating the various terminations of finite extension, we collect a notion of their general nature of figure. We have ideas of these no more than we have ideas of humanity or animality; but we know what we mean, and are able to explain our meaning when we speak of these, which we are not when we speak of the others.

Much more might be said, to show the difference between complex ideas and notions, and between general and abstract ideas; and the advantage that those (in the conception of which, internal sense, and in the communication of which, external sense, help intellect) have over such as are merely objects of intellect. I might expose, even to ridicule, the stir that is made about the pains and skill our masters pretend that they take to form the supposed idea of triangularity, for instance, that they may teach their scholars to know a triangle when they see it; though the meanest of their scholars, who have been used to contemplate particular triangles, will have made this notable discovery, "that every triangle is a space compre-"hended by three lines, and containing three angles," without any help of theirs, or skill or pains of his own. All the merit of our masters seems to be this, they begin to learn at the right, they begin to teach at the wrong end; which is an observation that may be enforced by what Mr. Locke himself says about maxims.

by appropriating general names to the several lots, if the term may be allowed me, into which the mind has sorted it's ideas and notions. The expedient facilitates extremely, as every man who thinks must observe, not only the communication of our thoughts to others, but the progress of them in their several trains, and all the operations of the mind about it's ideas; for though these general names have no abstract ideas annexed to them, nor, strictly speaking, any ideas or notions, yet are they not unaccompanied by ideas and notions. That would be to have no meaning at all, whereas they have a meaning, a plain and useful meaning or intention. What they have not, they borrow. They create no ideas in the mind; but they give occasion to the mind to collect and apply such ideas and notions as are there already. They call them forth, they marshal them, as it were; and by the manner in which, and by the occasions on which they do so, these names produce all the effect they are designed to produce, and carry us towards general knowledge, as far as our feeble intellect can crawl with their assistance, and much further than we could advance without it.

I think I have said nothing here which is not obvious and plain, and yet I have opposed, in almost all I have said, men of the greatest name in philosophy. But when we must oppose them, or belie intuitive knowledge, there is no reason to hesitate. I know, that though I can make some abstractions of my ideas, I am utterly unable

able to make such abstractions as Mr. Locke and other great masters of reason have taken it for granted that they could and did make. This I know as intuitively and as certainly as I know that I exist. If the difference lay in the degree alone, I should readily acknowledge, that other men might abstract better, and further than myself. But I am conscious, that there is no such power in my mind in any degree, and therefore I conclude, since we are all made of the same clay, a little coarser or a little finer, that there is no such power in their minds. I conclude, after my lord Bacon, that, "since abstract ideas "have been introduced, and their dignity exalted "with so much confidence and authority, the "dreaming part of mankind has in a manner pre-"vailed over the waking." If Mr. Locke could dream he had such a power as he describes this of abstracting to be (a power to form with "some "pains and skill the general idea of a triangle," for instance, "neither oblique, nor rectangle, "neither equilateral, equicrural, nor scalenon, "but all, and none of these at once*") let writers learn to be less dogmatical, and readers to be less implicit. It is undeniable, that there is such a thing as philosophical delirium. Men of the coolest tempers, we see, are liable to be seized by it; and when they are so, even their minds are apt to flatter, to deceive, and to debauch themselves. I quote this as an instance

* Essay, l. 4, c. 7.

of

of the mind's being debauched, as well as flattered and deceived; for surely it is a sort of debauchery to turn art into artifice: and he does no less, whether he means it or not, who, instead of employing general words for the purposes we have mentioned, vends them for signs of ideas, abstracted as no mortal could ever abstract.

Since knowledge has increased, their own knowledge and that of other men, philosophers and divines have been forced to moderate their pretensions. They have fallen a little in the value they had set on human intellect: and I suspect, or rather I would hope, that they must fall a good deal more, how unwilling soever they may be to part with that tinsel which has passed so long for gold and silver. But there is still a remainder of the old leaven in philosophy. Many opinions that were assumed without any proof, or on the slightest, are still entertained as opinions, or established as doctrines. Among these gross errours there is scarce any more gross, or of more extensive influence than this, that supposes a power in the mind, which the mind has not, and the reality of ideas of general natures, though these cannot exist abstracted from particulars. This errour is the great principle on which many fine-spun logical and metaphysical speculations proceed, and from most of which we might be delivered, to the honour of common sense, the improvement of real knowledge, and the advantage of mankind, if it was sufficiently exploded. Till it is so, and as long as the leaven of this er-

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rour, among others, continues to ferment, men will be apt to mispend their time in search of fantastic knowledge, by the means of imaginary powers. The field of knowledge, which Bacon, and Descartes, and Locke have purged of so many weeds, may be therefore overrun again by a new crop springing from old roots, that they neglected to grub or helped to preserve. Metaphysics may not only maintain, but confirm and enlarge their empire. The lofty madness of Plato, and the pompous jargon of Aristotle, may be propagated again, with as great success as ever, from those colleges and schools that deserved once the name of venerable bedlams. The learned of another generation may see, perhaps universally, immaterial essences and eternal ideas in the divine mind; they may contemplate substantial forms, and comprehend even the entelechia, while they neither see visible, nor feel solid extension. All this may happen, and if dulness should reestablish her empire in poetry, while that of madness is restored in philosophy, how glorious an age may the next become, when all the defects, and all the follies of this are complete? Once more all this may happen. Our learned Queen interests herself in the nice and subtile disputation about space: from metaphysics she rises to theology. She attends frequently to the controversy, almost fourteen hundred years old, and still carried on with as much warmth, and as little success as ever, about that profound mystery the Trinity. She studies, with much application, the "analogy of revealed religion to the constitu-

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" tion and course of nature." She understands the whole argument perfectly; and concludes, with the right reverend author, that it is not " so clear a case, that there is nothing in revealed " religion." Such royal, such lucrative encouragement must needs keep both metaphysics and the sublimest theology in credit; and in short,

" Signs foll'wing signs lead on the mighty
" year."

In the mean time, let what has been here said stand for one example of the arts employed by the mind to enlarge it's knowledge, and to let it serve to show how these arts degenerate into artifice, deceive even the mind that invented them, and, instead of enlarging knowledge, enlarge and multiply errour.

Another example of the same kind it may be proper to consider. Hobbes says somewhere, that words are the counters of wise men, and the money of fools. The observation is just, and the expression happy. Ideas and notions are the money of wise men, and they pay with these; while they mark and compute with words, the money of fools. But yet so difficult is the intellectual commerce, so narrow the intellectual fund, that the wisest men are frequently obliged to employ their money like counters, and their counters like money; in one case, however, without loss, in the other without fraud. We may be said to do the first, that is, to employ

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our money like counters, when we employ ideas of one kind to mark and suggest ideas of another. We employ, as it were, in this case, good and current money of one species, to compute and fix the sum payable in another: and thus guineas may stand in the place of shillings, or shillings serve to represent guineas. This happens whenever we make use of figures; and figures are so interwoven into language, that they make up a great part of our discourse, and a greater than is commonly apprehended.

The figurative style is peculiarly that of poets, or of the tribe nearest allied to theirs, I mean orators. In this style the frightened wave returns: or Cicero, in his Philippics, thunders against Antony. To employ this style with true propriety is hard, no doubt. It must needs be hard to keep up an exact precision and propriety of ideas and words, when two sets of each are concerned, since it is extremely so to keep them up, when one set of each is alone the business of the mind. It is hard for another reason: because imagination, whose talents are neither precision nor propriety, not the former at least, is employed in the application of one of these sets of ideas and words to the other, and because it rarely happens, that great heat of imagination and great coolness of judgment, that happy association which forms a genius, and appears eminently in all your writings, go together, and keep pace with one another. When they do so, the figurative style, that some of our neighbours have

almost

almost rejected even out of poetry, and that we have abused most licentiously in it, serves to enforce, as well as to explain and adorn, but never to deceive. Somebody has said of the boldest figure in rhetoric, the hyperbole, that it lies without deceiving: and, if I may venture to make a little alteration, in a definition given by my Lord Bacon, I will say of rhetoric in general, the practice of which I esteem much, the theory little, that it applies images, framed or borrowed by imagination, to ideas and notions which are framed by judgment, so as to warm the affections, to move the passions, and to determine the will; so as to assist nature, not to oppress her.

But beside the use which poets make, with some profusion, as they have a right to do, and orators make, or should make more sparingly, of this art of the mind, which, transferring ideas from one subject to another, makes that become graceful and reasonable, and thereby useful, when the application is judicious, which would be monstrous and absurd, and thereby hurtful, without it; there is another use, which the severest philosophical writers may and do make of it in their meditations, as well as their discourses; a use that if it does not serve to increase, serves, most certainly, to facilitate and propagate knowledge. They who meditate (for every man, and probably every animal thinks) must have observed, that the mind employs all it's forces, and memory and imagination among the rest, not only to form opinions, or to arrive at knowledge, but to set the

the objects of opinion or knowledge in the fullest and clearest light, for it's own satisfaction, and for the ease of communicating these thoughts to other minds in the same order, and with the same energy, as they are contemplated by it. Not only judgment compares, in a steady train, ideas and notions that are present to it and those that are intermediate, those that sagacity discovers to help the process of comparing; but memory and the faculty of imagining are employed to bring in adventitious helps. Such they may be called; for though foreign ideas divert the attention of the mind, when they break in unsought and by violence, they help it often when they have been sought and are admitted by choice. They lead the mind, indirectly and round about, as it were, in many cases, to such truths, or to such evidence of truth, as could not have been attained so easily nor so fully without them.

Mr. Locke, in the preface to his famous Essay, as he entitled it with great modesty, since it is surely the most complete work of this kind that any language can boast, excuses himself for "dwelling long on the same argument sometimes, "and for expressing it different ways," by alleging "that some objects had need to be turned on "every side; and that when a notion is new, it "is not one simple view of it that will gain it "admittance into every understanding, or fix it "there with a clear and lasting impression—that "our understandings are no less different than "our palates;" and more to the same purpose.

Now if it be necessary to present our notions to the view of others in several lights, and under variety of expressions, I cannot see why they should not be sometimes viewed through the medium of figure; nor why the palates of those who relish this style should not be gratified. Mr. Locke gratifies them in this very place, and in most pages of his work. What is the juxtaposition of ideas? what is that chain which connects, by intermediate ideas that are the links of it, ideas that are remote, but figurative style? what else are those dormant, that is, sleeping pictures, which are wakened, as it were, and brought into appearance by an act of the mind? what else are the pictures drawn there, but laid in fading colours, or the images calcined to dust by the flames of a fever? His invective, therefore, against figurative speech, in his chapter of the abuse of words, must be understood not of the use, but of the abuse of this style; though it seems to go further, or it will not be agreeable to his own practice, nor to the truth, as I imagine. False eloquence there is, no doubt, and fraudulent eloquence too. Figurative style often causes one, and is often employed by the other; but there is false and fraudulent reasoning too without eloquence: and we may find as much trifling and fallacy in some of the most dry didactic writings, as can be shown in those of poets and orators.

Rhetoric may be a powerful instrument of deceit and errour, and so may logic too. Both of them

them are impertinent when they are reduced into arts, and are cultivated and followed as such. But if rhetoric were banished out of the world, and logic with it, eloquence and reason would still remain. Mr. Locke says, very figuratively, and very eloquently, speaking against figure and eloquence, that they have, "like the fair sex, too "prevailing beauties, to be spoken against." He could not speak against them out of their language. How should he? We may disaffect eloquence as much as we please, or nature may have saved us this task by refusing us the talent, but we must cease to speak, if we lay figurative speech wholly aside. Figures are so necessary in the communication, at least, of our thoughts, that they are wove into the very constitution of language, as we have observed already. If we did not choose, we should be forced to employ them often in common conversation about common objects, and the ordinary affairs of life; and they are still more necessary, when subjects more abstruse and more abstracted from sensible objects are concerned.

God alone knows how nearly external and internal sense, of which we have one common perception, though the objects be different, and though the latter be occasioned and limited by the former, are allied. All that will ever be said to explain it, will explain no more than all that has been said already. But however, to assert that there is no other source of ideas but sensation, is to assert something most evidently false;

for to explain what has been touched already, or hinted at least, we have as determinate and as clear ideas of thought, as of extension or solidity: of our inward faculties, of their operations, and of the modes of thinking, as of the powers, the actions, and of the modifications of mere body. Were it otherwise, we should have no intellectual ideas at all; for ideas, if they cannot be represented in thought without corporeal images, are not such most certainly. But now, though corporeal images have nothing to do in framing, they have much to do, and bear a principal part in communicating intellectual ideas. I say a principal part only, for some of these are signified without their help. We say, that we perceive, discern, abstract, compound, or compare our ideas: but we say too, that we think, and that we know. The former expressions, and a multitude of others, are taken from outward and applied figuratively to inward sensations. The latter, and some few others, perhaps, signify immediately, and without any figure, the intellectual idea they are designed to signify.

If we ask how all this comes to pass, the true answer seems obvious enough. By an art, which experience has suggested to the mind. The ideas of outward objects have their criterions in these objects. Body is the archetype of corporeal ideas, and this criterion therefore is common to all mankind. But intellectual ideas, having no sensible, have no such common criterion. He who had first ideas of extension and solidity, and who invented

vented the words, could explain his meaning by appealing to the senses of other men. But he could not communicate his ideas of reflection by the same short and easy method, the passion of his mind in receiving these ideas by sensation, nor the operations of his mind about them afterward. He borrowed, therefore, corporeal images to express them, and talked of perceiving, discerning, and so on, in the figurative style. Thus we may conceive how men came to employ corporeal ideas, for the most part, to explain the intellectual phænomena, and sometimes to assist even their own reflections on them. The art was reasonably invented, and usefully employed. But it soon became artifice, as soon as philosophers took into their heads to affect such science as they are incapable of attaining. Then it was that they employed, among many other expedients, the absurd use of figures that figured no real ideas, nor any thing more than philosophical dreams, and whimsies of overheated brains. The same practice has continued from that time to this, from Plato down to Malebranche, from Aristotle down to Leibnitz, from Plotinus and Jamblicus down to Agrippa and Fludd. It begins to grow out of date. Men require now something more real than figure, more precise than allusion, and more particular than metaphysical abstractions. Philosophers may write as sublimely as they please about pneumatics, or the doctrine of spirits, and as profoundly as they please about ontology, or the doctrine of Being abstracted from all Being.

They will be taken up for amusement, like other writers of romance, and be laid aside like them, when any thing more worthy of attention presents itself to the mind.

It is time indeed, that they should be treated in this manner, and that men who betray themselves should impose no longer on others. When I say that they betray themselves, I mean it particularly with regard to the inconsistency of their pretensions and their practice. St. Austin says, somewhere or other, for I quote the passage from the logic of Portroyal, that "men are so accustomed since the fall to consider corporeal things "alone, the images of which come into the brain "by the senses, that most of them believe they "cannot conceive a thing when they cannot represent it to themselves under a corporeal "image." Such a one, I suppose, was the logician, who for want of enlarging his definition of idea to whatever is an object of the mind in thinking, or for want of supplying this defect by a true definition of notion, which would have been better perhaps, was so absurd, and so profane, as to advance that we conceive God under the image of a venerable old man, because we have no other sensible idea of him. But since the mistaken belief spoken of by St. Austin is owing to custom, and is that of most men only, I would ask why so great a philosopher and saint, as he was, followed this evil custom, and filled his works with more and more forced applications of corporeal images to intellectual and divine subjects than any writer, perhaps,

perhaps, of that metaphorising and allegorising age? Shall we say, with one of his disciples, who in every other respect, and even in this was his equal at least, that "the soul is become since "the fall as if it were corporeal by inclination, "and that the love it has for things sensible di- "minishes constantly the union, or the relation it "has to things intelligible*?" But beside that one of these fathers ascribes to a fatal necessity, what the other ascribes only to an ill habit, how can this happen to those extraordinary men, who abstract their souls from every thing material, and wrap themselves up in pure intellect so frequently, although they confess that "the mind depends in "some sort on a portion of matter?" How can it happen to souls that are "united with the su- "preme mind immediately, and in a most inti- "mate manner, though the distance between "them be infinite†?"

Ordinary men may be content to make the most of the commerce they find established in their nature between sense and intellect, to push their inquiries about mind as far, and no further than a few general notions, which intuitive observation will justify; and in this process, and in the communication of their intellectual ideas, to avail themselves of corporeal ideas, and to make the little they know of body subservient to the less that they can know of mind. This is enough, no

* Recherche de la Verité, l. 1, c. 13.

† Ib. pref.

doubt, for vulgar souls confined to material habitations, wherein they feel the weight of a heavy atmosphere, and the malignity of an easterly blast. But it is not enough for those who are raised above the vulgar, metaphysicians by nature, divines by grace, "all whose ideas are to be found "in the efficacious substance of the divinity*," and into whom "a human soul, and a rational "mind were insinuated not to be quickened, not "to be blessed, not to be illuminated, except by "the very substance of God †." These men are more conversant with intelligible than sensible beings, with the intellectual world over which they range, than with the material world whose existence they deny sometimes; and therefore it should seem, that it would have been more easy to them to have invented a metaphysical language, than to have continued the use of words already appropriated to ideas as distant as those of real beings from the entia rationis, or as those of body from those of spirit. It would have been likewise of extreme benefit to mankind, whom these philosophers take so much generous pains to instruct, if they had been able, by the help of such a language, to set their sublime conceptions in a direct and full light, instead of that indirect and half light which comes reflected from images foreign to them.

* Recherche de la Ver. l. 3, p. 2, c. 6.

† Insinuavit nobis Christus animam humanam, et mentem rationalem non vegetari, non beatificari, non illuminari nisi ab ipsâ substantiâ Dei. Ib. cited from St. Austin in Joan. trac. 23.

I am

I am ready, therefore, on this account to lament, that the attempt of Bishop Wilkins, to form such a language, miscarried, and that Leibnitz neither finished his alphabet of human thoughts, nor his metaphysical algebra. It may be said, perhaps, that these helps, great as they would be, would be such only for the greatest genii, and that we have, therefore, a vast obligation to these philosophers, who make no longer the distinction that their predecessors made of initiated and profane, but deliver the mysteries of their science in vulgar language, with condescension to our gross conceptions, that would never comprehend them if they were kept in their native abstraction, instead of being clothed with ideas that fall under the view of imagination. Just so, it is said, that the sacred authors writ agreeably to all the vulgar notions of the ages and countries in which they lived, out of regard to their ignorance, and to the gross conceptions of the people: as if these authors had not writ for all ages and all countries, or as if truth and errour were to be followed like fashions where they prevailed. This condescension, then, is very ill placed; and it would have become much better the great men we speak of, to have raised their fellow-creatures up, than to have let themselves down; to have cured us of all our errours, than to have left us in any; and to have abstracted us, or to have taught us plainly the great secret of abstracting ourselves, in our meditations, from all things sensible, than to have left us immersed in them.

But to speak more seriously and more plainly; the truth is, that if these admired masters of reason did not hold the vulgar language, and make up their intellectual schemes of corporeal ideas, they would have nothing to say more than every man, who contemplates his own mind with attention, may know without their help. They are so far from being confined and clogged by the use of the idea they take from body and apply to mind, that it is by their means alone they extend their range and seem to rise. Observe how father Malebranche sets out in the very first section of his Research of Truth. He begins by considering perception and will. One of these is a passive, the other an active power of the mind. We know them intuitively, or the ideas we have of them by reflection are perfectly clear and distinct; so clear and distinct, that definitions and explanations of these, as of all our simple ideas, can only serve to perplex the mind and to render them obscure. To what purpose then did this philosopher descend into a long detail of comparisons between these two faculties of the mind, and two of the properties that belong to matter, that of receiving figures, and that of being determined to various motions? It was not necessary to explain what needed no explanation, but it was necessary to lay, as he did lay, with much ingenuity, though very precariously, some of the foundations of this system.

This is the common practice of metaphysical writers; and what Malebranche and our Berkeley have

have done so plausibly, and so agreeably, that they, who are far from admitting the systems of either, read the writings of both with the utmost pleasure, the most heavy philosopher, whose name ever ended in *us*, pretends to feel. Nor shall we be much surprised at their success, if we consider how the most extravagant poets, such as Ariosto for example, who wander continually beyond the bounds of nature, and wherever a lawless fancy leads them, soften sometimes the grossest absurdities under the mask of figures. Struck by these, the mind grows attentive to them, stops it's attention there, and rather supposes an application than examines it.

When amusement alone is concerned, and not instruction, this may be pardonable on both sides, in the author and in the reader. But in more serious studies, where one writes to instruct, and the other reads to be instructed, it is pardonable in neither. One rule, therefore, ought to be observed inviolably, the rule I mean of admitting or rejecting figures as they are justified or not justified by their application. Their application is their criterion. Metaphysicians and divines, therefore, who have made figures and comparisons of so great consequence by their use of them, should consider, that the principal and most proper use of them is like that of a varnish on a picture. As a painter would be thought mad who should varnish an unpainted canvas, so must they be exposed to this censure, or to one more severe, if it appears at any time that they had no clear and determinate

determinate ideas in their minds, concerning intellectual subjects, and spiritual natures and operations, when they employed, under pretence of explaining them, so many others borrowed from the objects of sense. When they have really such ideas in their minds, they must remember too that figures and comparisons are varnish still. It must not be used to alter the intellectual picture, it must only serve to give a greater lustre, and to make it better seen. Intellectual ideas and notions, in the mind of the philosopher or divine, should lead them to the invention of figures, and these figures should lead the scholar to these intellectual ideas and notions. When the latter is not so led, easily and almost unavoidably, the figures are improper, or he has a right to conclude that the philosopher or divine had no such ideas nor notions in his mind. Now the first of these proceedings is impertinent, and the second is an arrant fraud. Figures in general, these of speech, and all others that do not typify determinately, are unworthy of rational creatures, how much more of God? and figures that typify nothing, are nothing, or they are worse than nothing; they are so many lies, since they pretend to denote something real, when nothing real exists. How the sight of that brazen serpent, which Moses erected in the desert, cured the Israelites of the venomous bites of real serpents, I know not. Miraculously, say our divines. Just as other images work cures at this day, say your divines. Be this as it will, the figure typified very determinately

determinately what God intended it should typify, when he said, "pone eum pro signo." But when your divines and ours agree to make it a sign of the Christ lifted up on the cross and crucified, he must be very cabalistical indeed who can discover the same determination. Real serpents had caused a real plague. A brazen serpent was the figure that signified this event to be over. It signified, therefore, at the same time, that the Son of God himself was to come into the world near two thousand years afterward, to deliver mankind from the allegorical plague of sin, which he did not most certainly cause. How reasonable is one, how absurd the other application of this figure? How necessary is it therefore to examine scrupulously the application of every figure, that we may not be imposed on by false appearances? But I will conclude these Reflections by an example taken from figurative speech. It will be thus more close to my purpose, and that it may be the stronger to show the abuse of figures, it shall be taken from one that has a real, and be contrasted with one that has an imaginary application.

The word discourse is derived from a Latin verb, which signifies to run about, and by the motion of our legs, and the agitation of our whole body (for when the word was invented all men believed they had bodies) to traverse many different grounds, or the same ground many different ways. Now the application of this corporeal image to what passes in the mind, or to the action of the mind

mind when we meditate on various subjects, or on many distinct parts of the same subject, and when we communicate these thoughts to one another, sometimes with greater, and sometimes with less agitation and rapidity, is obvious. It answers as nearly as such applications can answer, and there is no danger that this figure should communicate a false idea, or fail to produce that which it is designed to produce. There can be neither equivocation, perplexity, nor disappointment in the use of it.

The word inspiration is derived, like the other, from a Latin verb which signifies to blow in; and it has been said, that "the image might be borrowed to denote an action of God in an extraordinary manner, influencing, exciting, and enlightening the mind of a prophet, or apostle." How many assumptions are here in one short sentence? and how impossible must it be to come at any thing on which a reasonable mind can rest, while figures are explained by other figures that want explanation as much? Influencing is a vague term, and may be applied several ways with equal propriety. But exciting and enlightening denote different kinds of action, and neither of them has any relation to inspiration, or blowing in. Here then is metaphor heaped on metaphor, without any true application to an intellectual idea, and we know as little what is meant by inspiration as we did before. I conceive inspiration even less than abstraction. The latter, such as it is represented by most philosophers, appears to me impossible;

possible; but I conceive what the supposed operation of the mind signified by this figurative term is; and by conceiving what is meant, or the application of the term, I conceive the apparent impossibility of the thing. But I have no more conception of this supposed action of the divine on the human mind, than I have of the spiration by which the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son, according to the decision of the council of Florence, that met to reconcile the Greek and Latin churches in the fifteenth century. The doctors of abstraction, therefore, require, that we should believe against knowledge, and those of inspiration, that we should be implicit without it. Now this would be a great deal too much, even if we did not know the use that has been made of the supposed natural power of abstraction, and of the supposed supernatural gift of inspiration. But both are sufficiently known, and it is a little too late, and but a little, to impose either on us, in the character of philosophers. If we submit to be implicit in another character, and in one of the cases, as far as it is necessary to keep us even now within the pale of the Christian church, we shall do very prudently. But it will be true, however, that the term of inspiration is a figure that gives us no intellectual idea, because it is not really the image of any.

There was a time, and it lasted long, when this term was employed in a literal sense. I refer to the time when Heathenish, Jewish, and Christian superstition prevailed separately first, and then

unitedly. Ignorance and fear produced superstition; and superstition, in it's turn, maintained ignorance and fear in the minds of men. Thus superstition broached the notion of inspiration; and when the notion was once established, and the fact believed, supposed inspiration served to confirm and authorise superstition. That which has happened in so many other instances, happened in this; a groundless and absurd opinion, which grew into vogue in dark ages, and was consecrated by a rude and ignorant people, prevailed in ages more enlightened. Men adopted what they would not have invented, and knowledge seemed to increase for no other reason, or to no other purpose, than to defend, to cultivate and to improve errour.

Inspiration, which has been since ascribed to a metaphysical cause that metaphysicians cannot explain, was esteemed at first a physical operation, that was obvious to the senses. The goats of Coretas approached a cavern on the hill of Parnassus. They fell into strange agitations, and made an unusual noise. The shepherd followed them, and as soon as he came near enough to receive the influence of the subterranean inspiring blast, he began to be agitated like his goats, and to prophecy like them; for we may believe, as reasonably as any part of the story, that the only difference consisted in this, his language was understood, that of his goats was not. On this experience was the Temple built, and the famous oracle established at Delphi, "commune humani

"generis

" generis oraculum," as Livy calls it. The Pythian priestess sat on a tripod, lest she should fall into the cavern when her head began to turn, and from thence she uttered, with prophetic fury, the inspirations she received, not from above, but from below. Many other examples might be brought of such physical inspirations, but this one is sufficient for my present purpose; at least it will be fully so when I have added, that they maintained their credit so well, and so long, even among philosophers, that Tully introduces his brother, who was a zealous Stoician, as a person intirely convinced of their reality. So convinced he appears, that when an objection, taken from the disrepute into which this oracle began to fall, is opposed to the argument he had drawn from it's universal reputation, Quintus thinks it sufficient to answer on this physical principle, that the inspiring virtue of the earth, which used to excite and enlighten the mind of the Pythoness, might be worn out by age, as rivers have been seen to dry up, or to change their course *.

But this was not the sole, though it might be the first notion of a divine inspiration. Hesiod, and your Homer, and others more ancient than either, had filled the world with dæmons and genii: and as poets were the philosophers of those ages among the Greeks, the machinery of poetry

* —— Potest vis illa terræ, quæ mentem Pythiæ divino afflatu concitabat, evanuisse vetustate; ut quosdam evanuisse amnes, aut in alium cursum contortos & deflexos, videmus. De Divin. l. 1.

came

came soon to be that of philosophy. Plato, as great a poet as any of them, in the garb of a philosopher, multiplied vastly these imaginary beings, and assigned them different ranks and different employments. He made the system of an intellectual world, and, in the respect I am going to mention, as absurdly as many others, but more reverentially toward the Supreme Being. He supposed a chain of intermediate beings, from man up to God; and it is evident, that these beings were, in his system, the agents of the Supreme Being, both in the creation and government of the world. He did not raise up man to an immediate communication with God. The distance and the disproportion seemed to him too great. He supposed him influenced, that is excited and restrained, enlightened and inspired, as well as made, by other created beings; by whom this distance was nearly at least filled up, and this disproportion gradually lessened. In his system, therefore, a greater reverence was shown to the Supreme Being, than in those of some other theologians, in which God confers familiarly with men, and acts a part, not only in the most important, but in the most trifling scenes of our human farce. But still the absurdity remained of such a gradation of beings. That there is a gradation, I doubt not, upwards, as our senses inform us that there is one downwards. But such a gradation, by which finite approaches nearer and nearer to infinite, is inconceivable. The distance and disproportion will be still infinite.

But to return, and to conclude what I shall say about

about the notions that obtained among the heathens on this subject; for you know that I have reserved to myself a right of following the matter as it rises before me, without observing in these Essays, any more than I used to do in our conversation, a just proportion in the members of my discourse. The causes of inspiration then were principally these, an intoxicating wind or vapour that blew into the inspired persons, or the action of dæmons, or genii, on their bodies, or in them. Such beings were believed universally to exist; for even Democritus, if I mistake not, is said to have admitted them. But they were believed to be material, though spiritual and invisible; and whether Plato thought them all good and beneficent or no, the general opinion, and that even of the latter Platonicians, held that some were good, and some bad; that there were pure and impure spirits. Their contemporaries, the Christian fathers, affirmed, that these spirits were all of the latter sort. They attributed the whole secret of oracles rather to the malice of the devil, than to the priests. I have read in Basnage *, I think, that Origen and Chrysostom represented the priestess sitting on a tripod over the sacred vent, with her legs wide open to receive the spirit, and that some pretended the oracles were delivered through this honourable channel. Nay, that judicious person, the martyr Justin, scrupled not to assure the world, that these devils had carnal enjoyment of

* Antiq. Judaiques.

girls and boys too, in the very act of inspiration. The general effect of inspiration was madness and fury. Divine madness and divine fury they were called, and the persons, thus inspired, uttered their vaticinations in fits, that made the body swell, and distorted by convulsive motions. In this state, and when they were quite out of their senses, they were consulted by men who thought themselves in theirs, who were often the greatest, and, in public opinion, the wisest of mankind. Tully asks, on what authority we are to believe that the mad man sees what the wise man does not see, and that he who loses human sense acquires divine *? His brother might have referred him for an answer to the works of his admired philosopher, to that passage in the Phædon particularly, where Plato recommends so highly that divine fury, which exerts itself in vaticination, mystery, poetry, and love, and where he gives the preference over all other wisdom to that which divine fury infuses.

Now nothing could resemble more a Heathen than a Jewish vaticination, and no wonder is there, that it should be so. Egypt and the East were the great schools of such philosophy and theology as I have mentioned. They abounded with seers of visions and dreamers of dreams,

* Quid vero habet auctoritatis furor iste, quem divinum vocatis, ut quæ sapiens non videat, ea videat insanus, et is, qui humanos sensus amiserit, divinos assecutus sit. De Div. l. 2.

with

with prophets and diviners, with wizards and cunning men, with theurgic as well as natural magic, and all the occult sciences. The Greeks borrowed from hence almost all the knowledge, real and imaginary, that they had; and so did the Jews too, as some divines have had the candour to confess, while the crowd of them affect to maintain the contrary, against irresistible probability; and would persuade us, that the whole Heathen world was enlightened by the lamp of the tabernacle: as if any similitude of opinions, customs, and rites, which is a good proof, in general, that the more modern learned of the more ancient nation, was equally good to prove, that the more ancient learned of the more modern, the masters of the slaves, and a people that had a high opinion of themselves, of a people whom they despised. But, however this may have been, the Jews, according to the spirit of the Mosaic system, made the Supreme Being more frequently an immediate actor in matters of inspiration, as in all other matters, than the Heathen did; though they too employed the ministry of angels, whose names, at least, they learned first from the Chaldeans, if they did not come first acquainted with these spiritual beings among that people in their captivity.

This notion of an immediate action of God on the human mind became more common, and inspiration more metaphysical, in the Christian schools. Some of the heathen philosophers held opinions that led to this, and might have been

improved, so as to derive all inspiration immediately from the Supreme Being in some extraordinary manner or other, which they would not have been at a loss to represent, or rather to evade the necessity of representing, by the help of figurative style. Some of them assumed, that the human soul was drawn out of the divine nature, or was tinctured by it, or had catched it's fire from it. I know not how to express better those strange words; strange, I mean, in this application, hausti and delibati. They assumed, further, that the Divine Mind pervaded and filled all things; and, when they assumed thus much, it seemed easy to conclude, from this near relation of the divine and human mind, to an action of the former on the latter, "cognatione divinorum animorum animos humanos commoveri *."

Plato's Trinity, as little intelligible as it was, might have been another assumption by which to account, more particularly, for this divine act of inspiration. The second person, God's intelligence, the Word, made men: and, what could be more consequential, than to ascribe all particular inspirations to the third person, that universal spirit, that energy of God, which animates and governs the whole? No part of this could have shocked the opinions of those philosophical theists, who acknowledged not only a general providence, but particular providencies. As little could it have

* Tully de Div.

been

been thought repugnant to the principal which seemed common to them all, that principle of reverence to the one, the Father of Gods and men, whom they conceived to be beyond and before all existence. They could conceive no being, nor manner of being, equal to the Supreme; but neither did the Platonic trinity suppose that there was any such: and they might have placed the source of inspiration, according to this theology, much higher than obvious, visible causes, and even than the suggestions of dæmons and genii, without ascribing it to the first mind, or admitting any mind equal to the first. They had the more reason to do this, and to place inspiration, as it were, out of sight, when the credit of oracles began to fail, and a gross physical account of it would pass no longer.

But that which heathen theologers could do, Christian theologers could not, after the Nicæan Council at least, whatever they did or might have done before it. They ascribed inspiration, indeed, to the Holy Ghost; but the three persons of this Trinity making one God only, they ascribed inspiration to an immediate act of the Supreme Being, as the Jews had done before them, among whom this act, and the immediate presence of the Deity were said to be manifested often in a sensible manner. Something of this kind obtained at first among the Christians. Voices from Heaven, for instance, and the visible descent of the Holy Ghost, would

have made inspiration, if these phænomena had continued, as much an object of sense in the Christian system, as it had been ever in that of the Jews or of the Heathen. But these phænomena did not continue; and though signs and wonders were said to be wrought by persons inspired, inspirations became invisible, and the notion of it purely metaphysical; less absurd than former notions, perhaps, but more remote too from human comprehension.

The consequence of all this was, that the proof of inspiration resting on authority and opinion, it became very equivocal. Every sect and every council pretended to it; and while they opposed and damned one another, what one side attributed to inspirations of the Holy Ghost, the other attributed to suggestions of the devil; for in this system the Holy Ghost, that is God himself, is the inspirer and comforter, and the devil, an inferior, a created spirit, and yet a rival to the Father of all Spirits, is the tempter and tormentor. How God acts on the human mind to inspire and comfort, and the devil to tempt, was then, and is still, a metaphysical or theological secret. But the power of tormenting, which the devil exercised in those days, was no secret at all. Legions of impure spirits were believed to take often possession of the bodies of men, from whence nothing could drive them but aspersions of holy water, and other forms of ecclesiastical conjuration, performed by priests; that is, by men on whom the imposition

imposition of hands had conferred the Holy Ghost, in a constant succession from the Apostles. This conjuration had been first taught by Solomon, as Josephus asserts, in the eighth book of his Antiquities; and it continued long in credit, for much the same reasons that oracles and the arts of divination had done so formerly. It is kept in some use still by the Roman clergy, and our reformed clergy would not be sorry, perhaps, to revive this pious practice.

While ignorance and superstition reigned triumphantly, and the fantastical ideas and notions which they communicate, and which authority, education, and habit, do in some sort realize in the mind, spread and prevailed; men might be easily persuaded, that the spirit or breath of God, which blew into the face of the first man, and made him a living creature*, might blow, likewise, on extraordinary occasions, and in an extraordinary manner, into the faces of some of his posterity, as into chosen vessels. They might be easily persuaded, that this breath was not only a principle of life to all, but an influencing, exciting, and enlightening principle to some. They might imagine, without any great effort, that the effect of this occasional breath was to fan into a flame the latent sparks of a certain fire, that had been kindled in the original constitution of man,

* Inspiravit in faciem ejus spiraculum vitæ, et factus est homo in animam viventem, are the words of Moses.

and had been extinguished by the fall. They might imagine, that they knew really what all this meant; and on such reasonings, which would have been none of the worst they employed, they might have proved to themselves and others the inspiration of Christian saints, to whom sublime mysterious truths were revealed, and of Jewish prophets and seers, who foretold future events and recovered stolen goods; for even this, as low as it may seem, was a part of their employment, and one effect of their inspiration.

But this reign is well nigh over; or, if it continues in some of these parts of the world, it triumphs universally in none. He who pretends to instruct now must know first, and expect, if he uses any figure, to be called upon to explain his meaning; that is, to show his meaning without the veil of any figure. Inspiration was long understood in the literal sense of the word, not only while men imagined grossly, that it was the effect of a subterranean wind or vapour, but when they had spiritualized it a little, and fancied it a breath that came from above, or a spirit that descended on one prophet, and passed from one to another, with sensible effects. Since it could be received no longer in the literal sense, philosophers and divines have given up the literal sense; and kept the word, that signified something, to serve as a figure that signifies nothing, and that can be translated into nothing but some other figure. Figures and types are indeed the strongest entrenchments

trenchments of metaphysics and theology: and it is in them that the professors of these reputed sciences defend themselves the best.

A history of inspiration, like one of divination, would be a collection of such extravagancies and absurdities, as might be sufficient to make our species forfeit the character of reasoning creatures; if it did not show, at the same time, that by a free use of their reason men have detected, one after another, most of the fallacies, the grossest at least, that had been imposed on them by Heathens, Jews, and Christians; for even of these it cannot be denied. The fautors of inspiration are thus reduced to their last entrenchment; and having abandoned all their other posts as untenable, they endeavour to defend this by not explaining what has been refuted as often as any explanation of it has been attempted. Your friend, Atterbury, who knew more of classical learning, and even of divinity, than he did of politics, though he affected these the most, has sometimes lamented, that any explanation of the real presence in the eucharist had been given, and that the church had made any decisions about it. As long as it was held an inexplicable mystery, it was believed, he said; but as soon as divines had been so unskilful as to attempt to explain it, Berenger's recantation signified nothing, and it has been a disputed point ever since. If this be a right notion, as I incline to think it is, these two mysteries, that of the real presence, and that of inspiration, have had very different fates.

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The first set out a mystery, and was piously believed, till attempts to explain it showed, that it implied contradiction. The other set out as a natural phænomenon, and was so far from being thought a real mystery, how much soever it might remain such to the vulgar, that prophecy and divination, the effects of it, were thought attainable by purifications, purgations, and other physical methods; and that they became arts, which were taught in the schools by the Heathens, and the colleges of the Jews. But the notion of inspiration has ended in mystery, where the other began: and this expedient, the only one that can support it at all, would support it effectually, if these ages resembled a little better those wherein the belief of the real presence was first established.

It may be said, that an extraordinary action of God in the human mind, which the word inspiration is now used to denote, is not more inconceivable than the ordinary action of mind on body, and of body on mind; and I confess that it is not. But yet the cases are so widely different, that no argument can be drawn from one in favour of the other. It is impossible to doubt of an action which is an object of intuitive knowledge, and whereof we are conscious every moment; and it is impertinent to deny the existence of any phænomenon merely because we cannot account for it. But then this phænomenon must be apparent; and the proof that it exists, or has existed, must be such as no reasonable man can refuse

refuse to admit. Otherwise we shall be exposed to make frequently the ridiculous figure that philosophers have sometimes made, when it has been discovered, after they had reasoned long about a thing, that there was no such thing. We must not assume for truth, what can be proved neither à priori, nor à posteriori. A mystery cannot be proved à priori; it would be no mystery if it could: and inspiration is become a mystery, since all we know of it is, that it is an inexplicable action of the divine on the human mind. It would be silly, therefore, to assume it to be true, because God can act mysteriously, that is, in ways unknown to us, on his creature man; for just so Asgyll did prove, or might have proved, that men do not die, but are translated, because God can translate them. There is then no possibility of proving inspiration à priori; and the proofs that are brought à posteriori, for Christian inspiration, are not more decisive to Christians, than those which the Stoicians brought in favour of vaticination and divination were to them; nor than those, which the Mahometans and the worshippers of Foe bring of the same kind, are to them.

This word inspiration, about which I have said so much more than I intended, belongs properly to you sons of Apollo; and to you it should be of right restored. While you were at once poets, prophets, philosophers, and divines, and went about from house to house singing, as the Methodists do preaching, sublime doctrines, the use of

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it might be a little confused: and what you assumed in the two first characters, you might ascribe to yourselves and others in the two last. But since they are become distinct professions, as well as characters, and one of them, that of prophets, is extinct, inspiration may have it's place and use in poetry; but no where else. If philosophers and divines employ this word, which signifies a particular and determinate action, as a figure to signify some other action, they employ it improperly. It cannot serve to inform; but it may serve, and it actually does serve, to deceive. Our Quakers, our Methodists, and enthusiasts of every sort and in every religion, are confirmed, by the received use of this word, in the belief that the spirit of God descends upon them, is inspired into them, excites and enlightens their minds, and enables them, by it's powerful operation, to utter all the extravagancies, which are in their opinion so many divine truths.

It is the more reasonable to guard against every thing of this kind; because the hypotheses of some of our finest modern writers on the subject of the human mind, though they do not pretend directly to be inspired, seem to renew and improve the reveries or waking dreams of ancient philosophers, in such a manner as to lay again the foundations of superstition; by supposing an immediate and constant communication between the divine and the human natures. That Malebranche supposed such a communication, is evident in all his writings: and his

Christian and metaphysical meditations are nothing less than a dialogue between the Word and him. The conference was not held indeed in the terms and form of the dialogue; but the language he makes the Word to hold in it, he affirms to be conformable to the answers, which he thinks he received when he interrogated the Word on the same subjects.

I have sometimes wondered, that divines and metaphysicians, who have borrowed so many fantastical notions from Plato, have neglected one which they might have found in the apology of Socrates, and by which they might have accounted more probably, and more decently than they have done, for divine inspirations, revelations, and communications. They might have learned there to distinguish between the æthereal and elementary body. We may compare the first to a shirt, since the same Plato compares the second, in the Phædon, to a suit of clothes, and since it is worn under the other, "sub manifesto hoc "corpore latens." Now it was by this medium that Socrates was inspired by his dæmon, or guardian angel. He saw visions, and he heard voices: but how? Not by his elementary, but by his æthereal senses. Thus an inferior spirit, and not the Supreme Being, is the immediate actor; and inspiration is no longer an unmeaning figure of speech. But this is not enough for metaphysical divines. Our notions of humanity must be raised higher, even at the expense of debasing (for as such it appears to me) our notions of the divinity.

divinity. God and man must be more intimately joined, though by endeavouring so to join them, they renew, in some sort, the grossest absurdities of paganism.

Many instances might be produced of this sort, and some very flagrant. I will content myself in this place with the mention of one. Bayle observes, that the notion of seeing all things in the infinite Being, which father Malebranche advanced on this assumption, that our ideas must be in God, because they cannot be modifications of any created mind, differs little from the doctrine of Democritus, who taught, that the images of objects, which present themselves to our senses, are emanations of God, nay that they are God, and that the idea in our minds is God likewise *. The observation is certainly just, and I need not enlarge upon it to show you that it is so. Instead of that, I will ask you, whether the different hypothesis of a philosopher, whom you and I love and honour, has not some, though a more remote resemblance to the same doctrine. Both of them at least have, in my opinion, one common ten-

* The words of Tully are these, "Democritus, qui tum "imagines earumque circuitus in deorum numero refert: "tum illam naturam quæ imagines fundit ac mittat: tum "scientiam intelligentiamque." They will be better translated thus. Democritus, who places among the gods not only the images of the objects that surround and strike us, but that nature which pours forth and sends these images to us, and knowledge and intelligence. Cotta mentions the same notions afterward, not in the same words as Velleius, but to the same effect. Tully de Nat. Deor. l. 1.

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dency, that which I have just now mentioned. If I was perfectly persuaded, as I am very much of the contrary, that we perceive all our ideas in the divine mind, I could account for all that is attributed to inspiration by a figure, that would have a sort of metaphysical meaning. I could represent the soul as a mirror, and it has been so represented, I think, by some; and then suppose, that images received from the presence of God to it, are reflected by it, which would be like the reflected light of the sun, a secondary and fainter, but a divine illumination. Again, could I comprehend that visual language in which "the Author of Nature constantly speaks to the "eyes of all mankind;" I might be able, perhaps, to comprehend how God may speak to prophets and apostles in visions; or else I might deduce by analogy, that, as we think we see when we do not really see, but only receive ideas through the eye from an immediate action of God, so prophets and apostles might think that they employed the faculties of their own excited and illuminated minds, and signified their own thoughts by the words they pronounced, when they neither thought nor spoke, but when the breath of God articulated in their organs. I might be able to comprehend such sublime notions; and I should be glad, no doubt, to find how happily these doctrines coincide with that ancient opinion, that prophets prophesied often without knowing that they did so. But, I confess, that I comprehend as little our friend's hypothesis, as I do that of the father

father of the Oratory; though I comprehend very clearly how we may be said in some sort, and in some particular cases, to learn to see; that is, by the ordinary course of experience, and not by any divine agency.

Shall I own it? I cannot be mortified at my want of comprehension in this case. When philosophers employ clear and determinate ideas, such as are real not fantastic, and when they reason on principles that are evidently true, instead of such as are doubtful at best, I comprehend them without any extreme labour of mind. When they do otherwise, I mispend no time in making unprofitable efforts to comprehend them. Cotta treats the notions of Democritus, that have been mentioned, with the utmost contempt, and even Velleius had entered into no refutation of them. Bayle thinks a little genius could never form them, and that in order to form them, a man must comprehend the whole extent of power, which belongs to a nature capable of painting in our minds the images of objects. I will imitate in all similar cases the old academician, not the modern sceptic, who seems a dogmatist on this occasion. I will follow no man out of the high road of plain common sense. In that, the philosopher may lead me to all real knowledge; for common sense does not exclude uncommon discoveries in the search of truth. But the philosopher goes often out of this road, while the illiterate, unthinking crowd of mankind cannot go far in it. These are the two extremes in which men

men sometimes meet. The difference consists always in their acquisitions and habits, and not always in their natural faculties. The reason of one is not cultivated like that of the other; but the imaginations of both may be apt to warm and transport them alike. While the philosopher consults his reason alone, he will be always far before the other; but if the imagination carries him away, there is a chance that they may meet; and the philosopher, with all his knowledge, and all his reason, may have not his own whimsies alone, but those of the most vulgar understandings to support.

SECT. VI.

Having dwelt thus long on one art of the mind that degenerates into artifice, it is time I should proceed to another; and the art to be considered next is that which was intended when I said, that we are sometimes obliged to pay in counters, for want of ready money. What I mean by it is this: We are sometimes obliged in philosophical, as well as in common discourse, to make use of words that have no determinate, nor indeed, properly, any ideas or notions at all annexed to them. I say, we are obliged to do so, in order to distinguish this case from that of metaphysics and theology, which are almost wholly conversant, when they keep within their own bounds, and go neither into physics nor ethics, about words that have no intelligible meaning, words that have been

to conceal ignorance, and to create an appearance of science: whereas the words intended here, though they have no ideas nor notions, properly speaking, annexed to them, have however, a meaning and a use, an intelligible meaning and a good use. Two of them I will produce as examples, and they shall be words that serve to denote unknown causes of known effects. They take their precision, like the names of substances, from sensible effects; and they refer either to an unknown real cause, or to the unknown principle of some apparent cause.

Our ignorance of causes, our curiosity, and the extravagant opinions of philosophers about them, are equally great. I shall not enter on that subject here at least. Something, however, must be said about the notion of cause, in order to show the reason, and even necessity, of employing such words as I have mentioned, and to introduce what I propose to say concerning the use and abuse of them. Neglecting, therefore, all the abstract notions that are entertained about cause, the nice and trifling distinctions between the cause and the sufficient reason of any thing, and the other distinctions, as well as divisions, and subdivisions that have been made, and that serve, for the most part, to no other purpose than to perplex us in a labyrinth of words, let us content ourselves to understand when we speak of cause in general, "That, by the immediate, or remote, "the physical, or moral virtue whereof any thing

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" is what it is, or any thing is done as it is " done."

The Supreme Being is the first, and, strictly, the sole efficient cause. But, as we know nothing of his manner of being, so we know nothing of his manner of causing. In your Homer's machinery the gods are perpetually actors; but the poet neither employs them so much, nor more improperly, nor more unworthily, than philosophers and divines have presumed to employ the Deity. Let us think with greater reverence of God; and, while we acknowledge him to be the first, let us not imagine him to be the immediate cause of every phænomenon, and every thing that happens. Through how many mediums, if I may say so, may not the rays of divine efficacy pass before they arrive at us! Far be it from me to neglect, or to discourage, the contemplation of the first efficient Cause, who shines so gloriously in all his works. But let us adore him in the contemplation of his works, and of the order of second causes by which the system of them is maintained, and carried on. Second causes cannot be reckoned, in a strict philosophical sense, efficient, when they are considered relatively to the whole extent of being, at the head of which is God. But as they have a communicated efficiency in such degrees, of such kinds, and under such directions, as it is communicated to them by infinite wisdom and power, they appear efficient when they are considered relatively to us, and to our system: and since all our knowledge is, in

truth, relative to these, we may be well content to admit ideas that are so too, and that reach no further. These are our limits, and where our experimental knowledge of second causes stops, there our physical inquiries should stop. All beyond is metaphysical jargon; for at what point soever we leave physics for metaphysics, we fall of course into jargon. The ancients generally set out in it. The moderns too often conclude in it.

The first example I shall produce of words, that serve to denote unknown causes of known effects, shall be the word Chance. Every event that happens in the course of human affairs, how contingent soever it may seem, has a real and peculiar cause. But when these causes are too remote, or too complicated, to be easily or at all discerned by us, we call the event contingent, and the cause chance. Thus we endeavour to supply our want of ideas, to think with less confusion, to discourse more intelligibly, and to make up the sum with counters, which we cannot make up with money. But in this kind of payment there has been much abuse, and much deceit. Superstition attempted to make these counters pass for real money; and, instead of keeping the word chance to signify in it's application nothing more than this, that the cause of an event was unknown, to make it pass for an actual cause and a positive Being. Superstition impersonated it under the name of Fortune: and this chimerical divinity was supposed to direct arbitrarily all the

events, whose causes were not apparent, or which exceeded in good or ill the expectations of men. The Heathens accounted by it for past events, consulted it about future, and referred themselves to it in doubtful cases.

It is strange that such superstitions, instead of being confined to the heathen world, should have been as prevalent among God's chosen people, both Jews and Christians, and should be scarce exploded at this hour. It is stranger still, that a recourse to the decision of chance should be expressly commanded in the Old Testament, and occasionally countenanced in the New, even on so important an occasion as the election of an apostle in the place of Judas Iscariot. Yet so it is; and from hence we may believe it happened, that some even of the most puerile and absurd appeals to chance, if one can be more so than another, were long preserved among Christians, and by them applied most profanely and cruelly. Many different sortes or chances were consulted by the Heathen. Those of Præneste, where Fortune had a temple adorned with mosaic work by Sylla, who trusted much to the goddess, and took the name of Fœlix, on account of his success, which he ascribed to her, were extremely famous. I do not remember how these consultations were made; but those that had the name of Sortes Homericæ, and Sortes Virgilianæ, were made by dipping at random on some passage in the poems of Homer and Virgil; and the superstition was sure to be confirmed, whenever, as it could

not but happen often, future events seemed in any degree to have been figured in these passages. An odd instance of this, which is preserved in a tradition, derived, I think, from Mr. Cowley, I may mention as I go along. This poet and some other persons, attached to Charles the First, were with him in the Isle of Wight, where Cromwell kept him in prison till he brought him to the block. Their amusement, for it could be nothing more, was to try the Sortes Virgilianæ; and in trying them it is reported, that the unfortunate prince dipped on those terrible imprecations, that Dido makes against Æneas and his posterity, in the fourth book of the Æneid.

I said that these superstitious usages have been applied profanely and cruelly by Christians: and I was in the right to say so. What could be more profane than the practice of opening the sacred books, in order to take from the first passage that occurred a prognostic of events, and to degrade them to the same silly use, that the Heathens made of their poems? What could be more cruel than the custom of deciding causes, criminal and civil too, by duels, which was introduced by the barbarous northern nations; and was, notwithstanding the declarations of some popes against it, so far approved by the church, that it was followed on many occasions in ecclesiastical controversies, and that it was accompanied on all occasions with much ecclesiastical ceremony; even so far, that a priest blessed in the field the weapons of the champions? This trial, like

like that of passing blindfold over red hot ploughshares, and others, were appeals to chance as to a judge: and both these appeals, and the consultations of chance about future events, were founded on a theological axiom, invented to excuse them on one hand, and to create more reverence for them on the other; that God presides over chance, and directs it by interpositions of his providence; so that to interrogate chance was to interrogate God, and the decisions of chance were the decisions of God.

To apply the word chance in this manner, was absurd enough. But what shall we say of those philosophers, who ascribed the creation of the world to chance. Superstition perverted this innocent art of the mind; and a word, that signified no determinate cause at all, was made to signify a Superior Being, who governs the affairs of the world, and to whose agency those events were to be ascribed, that could not be accounted for otherwise. Philosophy, the philosophy of men who affected to put superstition under their feet, and to account by physical researches for all the phænomena, attributed the original of all things to chance. By this proceeding the Epicureans did not endeavour to screen their ignorance, but they pretended to show their knowledge of causes. They erected chance into a first physical cause, and derived the production of the universe from it. They assumed a chaos of innumerable heterogeneous particles, endowed with essential activity, and with whatever else was necessary for

their purpose, like the declination of these atoms; after which they concluded, that such a number of entities, in perpetual motion and action one on another, must pass, sooner or later, through all possible combinations. From hence they concluded again, that the formation of the world was caused by a certain concourse or combination of atoms, without the unnecessary help of a directing mind; and that, this concourse being fortuitous, the world was made by chance. But enough has been said of the use and abuse of this word. It is time to speak of those, that have been made of the word force.

Since even Alciphron the minute philosopher could frame no precise idea of force, though he "shut his eyes to assist his meditation," it might well be asked, how it comes to pass, that there are so many refined subtilties and nice distinctions about this same force? Ingenious and learned men might have employed their time much better most certainly, than they have done about "subtile abstracts, spiritual quintessences, un certo che "and un non so che." I am sorry to have this proof the more of the folly and affectation of philosophers. But I am not at all at a loss to account for them, nor to show from whence the difference arises between these visionaries, and those great men who have discoursed rationally about force. The difference arises plainly from hence. The former have abused this art of the mind, and supposed, or reasoned as if they supposed, that this word signified what common sense never meaned

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to signify by it. The others have not turned art into artifice in this manner; but have reasoned about force as about the unknown cause of sensible effects, or the unknown causality of apparent causes. It may seem strange, perhaps, to our first thoughts, that men should talk sense, for it never seemed strange that they should talk nonsense, about something whereof they have no ideas. But the reason why they do so, in the instance before us, will appear to our second thoughts extremely plain. That it may appear so the more, and that we may show the better how industrious the mind is to help it's natural infirmities by art in the conceptions and expressions of things, let me add a few reflections to what has been already observed.

Without meaning what those philosophers meaned, who screened so much ignorance behind the notions they endeavoured to establish of occult qualities, and occult causes, we may say, that the causality of apparent causes, and, therefore, the first efficient causes in the order of second causes, will be always occult, whatever hypothesis or system we follow. The Peripatetics and Schoolmen imagined the qualities of substances, as they were and are still called, and which are supposed to excite ideas immediately by their immediate action on our organs, and mediately by their action on other bodies, to be real entities, derived from substantial forms, inherent in substances somehow or other; but distinct from them, and added to them. Modern philosophers, more intelligibly and more

more conformably to experience, have banished all these notions of qualities distinct from body; and have taught us, that the action of body on body is produced exclusively of them by the inward constitution of body itself; and is varied according to the divers constitutions of the bodies that are at any time passive, and the different states they are in. This opinion leads us on to observe the mechanism of body, the laws of motion, and whatever else makes any part of physical inquiry. The other is founded in abstract general notions, which the knowledge of particulars had little share in framing, and points up to the chimeras of imagination. But still, even the best of them stops short of the real essences of substances, shows us more causes, but shows us as little the principles of their causality.

Although the system of philosophy be, in this respect, totally changed, yet the mind has found it convenient, to preserve the notion of sensible qualities. They were thought real, and referred to substances as inherent specifically in them. They are conceived now to be qualities by imputation only, and refer to the manner in which our senses are affected. We cannot say, with strict propriety, this clock has several sensible qualities, though it marks the days of the month to our sight alone, and the hours and the minutes to our eyes and to our ears. We know that there are no such distinct qualities in the clock, and that all these effects are produced by one spring, governed and producing effects according

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to it's own temper, according to laws and directions resulting from the structure of the whole machine, and according to the texture and state of the organs of those to whom it is visible, or audible. Just so we cannot say, with strict propriety, that snow is cold by a cold quality, any more than white by a white quality; or that fire is hot by a hot quality. They excite ideas that we distinguish and mark by these words; but they contain nothing in them, that resembles these ideas. By the perceptions we have of these ideas, we mark, under the name of qualities, the divers effects of the unknown essences of substances.

This modern expedient (for the mind invents expedients as fast as it finds the want of them in the improvement, or more easy of improvement of knowledge, is the more reasonably employed on another account. Though there are no such distinct specific qualities in bodies as were assumed by philosophers, yet the particles which compose bodies are often heterogeneous, as they appear by sure experiments; among other instances in that of light, and in the production of colours. Now this heterogeneity, which is thought to consist in the different sizes of the particles, and which may consist in other differences undiscoverable by us, continuing the same, and each kind acting, and being acted upon, according to it's kind, this amounts, in some manner, to a notion of qualities contained in bodies; and being so conceived, the mind knows no more indeed

deed of the real constitutions of bodies than it knew before, but proceeds in this hypothetical manner a little better, and with greater clearness and precision in the pursuit of physical inquiries. These inquiries, thus assisted, enable us to analyse the component particles of bodies in their effects, and to discover in them too some general laws, by which the action of these component particles, separately and collectively, is directed. This is some knowledge, and has the appearance of being greater than it is. But there is something still behind, concerning which we cannot boast even the least appearance of knowledge. Body acts on body by contact and pulsion. This is certain, though it be not so certain, that body can act no other way, as philosophers generally assume. But even this pulsion is caused by motion, as motion is caused by pulsion; so that we get thus into a circle, and may go eternally round in the dark, without being nearer to discover what it is that puts mobility, that essential property of matter or body, into action, unless we suppose, that the motion impressed originally continues still without any diminution. Who can withhold his admiration from those discoveries that modern philosophy has made concerning the laws of motion, the properties of bodies that become apparent by them, and the actions of bodies on bodies that follow according to them? But who can, or will ever be able to say, what the springs of corporeal nature are, without which there could be neither action nor motion? What

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is that spring, for instance, which emits from the body of the sun innumerable particles of light, that make their passage of fifty millions of miles to our Earth in seven minutes of time, or thereabouts, with a velocity inconceivable, though demonstrated? Well may the cause be incomprehensible, when the effect passes comprehension.

Here now the word force, of which we are to speak, comes into play, and serves as a sign of the unknown causes of the phænomena both of nature and of art; for effects are produced in the works of art by an imitation of those of nature, whereof the causes are unknown even to the artificer. When we employ the word alone, it is of very vague signification, and imports nothing more than some determining power, intellectual or corporeal. But the mind takes two methods to give it greater precision, when that is necessary. We annex it sometimes to words which signify that whereof we would, on such occasions, denote the power in general to produce effects in physics, in mechanics, in ethics; and thus we say, the force of wind, the force of a mill, or the force of habit. We annex at other times to it words, that, referring to particular known effects, serve to fix, on every occasion, the meaning of it; just as we annex the words hot or cold, to signify certain supposed qualities of body, and, as intelligibly at least, as we use the names of substances. Thus we speak of attractive, repelling, impelling force, of the force of gravitation, of cohesion, and even of inactivity. Our Newton, who has opened, by

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the help of those sure guides, experiment and geometry, so large a field of knowledge and inquiry to present and future philosophers, concerning the greatest and the least phænomena of nature, was far from pretending to determine the efficient cause of his attraction, or what that force is, which makes bodies, and every particle of body, mutually tend to one another, and thereby give us an idea of attracting, according to what has been taken notice of already. He distinguished so carefully, between the particular attractions of the schools, and his meaning in the use of this word, that nothing could be more despicable than the ignorance or malice of those, who would have confounded them, and have made him an asserter of occult qualities, who discovered the most universal and the least occult quality, if I may have leave to call it so for once, that ever was, since it intercedes the whole corporeal system. To this, and to the several kinds of it, he referred all the phænomena that cannot be accounted for by impulse, and they are many; though many of those which were ascribed to a sort of attraction by the ancients are, on better foundations, ascribed to impulse by the moderns. But neither for the cause of impulse, nor of attraction, nor of any action of body even the most sensible, can philosophy account. They, therefore, who use the word force as the sign of an unknown cause, while they apply themselves solely to discover the laws by which this cause acts, and the effects it produces, make a proper use of the

the word. They who affect to talk in any other manner, either physical or metaphysical, about force, abuse the word most impertinently, and pervert into artifice a very useful art of the mind.

But this is not the only method, by which this art of the mind is perverted. It degenerates into artifice likewise by the use which they make of it, who invent words to point out causes, they suppose unknown, of effects whose real causes are known. In the former method men are led into errour, by affecting knowledge; in this, by affecting ignorance. Whatever force is, it is the cause of effects that are known, but cannot be ascribed to any cause that is known. In this the propriety of the word consists; for if they could be ascribed to any cause known and denominated, it would be improper, and the use of it could only serve to mislead. But there may be more than errour, there may be fraud in this case; for, to borrow an image from the application of the word chance, the fair gamester who should see a raffle of sixes thrown several times together, might ascribe it to chance, that is, to an unknown cause, very properly; but the sharper, who had loaded the dice, or who knew that they were loaded, would ascribe it to chance fraudulently, as well as improperly.

I could wish that Alciphron and Lysicles had made this observation to Euphranor, and had applied it to show him why they admitted the word force, and rejected the word grace. The task would

would not have been hard, since it would not have been hard to show him real causes sufficiently known, and sufficiently marked by words, of the effects ascribed by him to a cause supposed unknown, and marked by a distinct word appropriated to this purpose. They might have shown these causes to be the influence of a religious education, a warm head, and a warmer heart; hope, fear, grief, joy, strong passions, turned by prejudice and habit to devotion; devotion itself nursing it's own principles; the effect in it's turn becoming a cause uniform and constant, or redoubling it's force on the least failure, in acts of attrition, contrition, mortification, and repentance. They might have proved, not only by probable reasons, but by indubitable facts, the sufficiency of these and other known causes to produce all the effects commonly ascribed to grace, even the most astonishing that ever appeared in saints, confessors, or martyrs. Nay, they might have shown that effects more astonishing, and many of them better vouched than most of these, have been and are still daily produced in men, whom it would be blasphemous to repute under the divine influence. Alciphron might have illustrated this argument, in his serious character, by quoting the saints, confessors, and martyrs of idolatry and heresy; and Lysicles, in his gayer character, by quoting those of atheism, and of the most abominable vices, as well as the most indifferent customs, of pæderasty for instance, and of long beards.

I am thinking what Euphranor would have replied

plied to the minute philosophers, and can discover no reply worthy of that solidity and that candour, which render him equally admirable and amiable. He might have said, indeed, that he was misunderstood by them, that the parity he insisted on was not meant to "consist in a proof of grace, "as well as force, from the effects; that it was "only meant to answer an objection against the "doctrine of grace, supposing it proved from re-"velation, and not to prove it's existence; that, "therefore, if the parity was sufficient to prove "the possibility of believing grace without an "idea of it, the objection they had made was "answered, and he aimed at no more." But I think, that, as minute philosophers as I am willing to allow Alciphron and Lysicles to have been, they would have maintained very easily the pertinence of their objection, and the insufficiency of Euphranor's answer.

They might have said, there is not even the parity you now suppose between force and grace. Our objection, against the latter, did, in effect, anticipate your reply: and, if we allowed your reply to be a good one, it would neither strengthen your cause, nor weaken ours. The parity between force and grace, which you confine now to a possibility of believing one as well as the other, is not sufficient; because it is not real. The possibility of believing force, is nothing more than the possibility of believing, that every effect has a cause, though the cause be unknown to us, and the pro-

priety of the word consists in the application of it to no other cause. The disparity and impropriety do not arise from our having no idea of grace, for it is true that we have none of force; but they arise from hence, that there is not the same possibility of believing a cause whereof we have no idea, and which cannot be ascertained by it's effects, as there is of believing one whereof we have no idea, indeed, but which may be ascertained by it's effects. You assume grace as a cause of one particular kind, an immediate influence of God on the mind, and you apply it to effects that may have causes of several kinds. Should a word be invented to signify a moral cause of effects purely physical, or a physical cause of effects purely moral, you would laugh at the invention, and you would be in the right. But is it a jot less ridiculous to assign a particular cause, either natural or supernatural, of effects that may be produced by any, or all of these, and to think to save the absurdity by saying, that the word invented to denote this cause has no idea attached to it, no more than that of force?

The use of the word force can have no equivocal consequence, the use of the word grace may. The testimony, nay the conviction of men, that they felt the influence of this unknown cause, would not take off the equivocation. How should it, after all the examples that may be brought from daily experience? A real enthusiast doubts no more of his perceptions of the operations of grace in-

informing his mind and determining his will, than he doubts of his perceptions of the action of outward objects on his senses, and perhaps less.

Another thing, which I imagine that the minute philosophers would have said to Euphranor, is this. Since the parity you endeavour to establish between force and grace cannot be so established, as to answer your purpose on any principles of reason; it remains, that the notion of grace cannot be received, nor the word employed on any other authority, than that of implicit faith in the revelation, by which you suppose the existence of grace proved. That authority obliges us to believe an action or an influence of God on his elect, the manner of which no human idea can reach. But on what authority, Euphranor, do you answer our "objection against the doctrine of "grace, by supposing it proved by revelation?" If you have proved this fact, that the Christian revelation, in which the doctrine of grace is contained, was made by God to mankind, as all facts, and especially one of this importance, ought to be proved, for every other kind of proof proves nothing, we will agree, though there be not the same reason for admitting grace as for admitting force, that both are to be received alike. Our objection was insufficient, but your answer then was unnecessary; for surely nothing can be more unnecessary, than to go about to establish on probable arguments, what is already established on demonstration: and the real existence of grace has been already demonstrated, if the truth of

revelation, in every part of it, has been so; since no proposition can be more demonstrated than this, that a doctrine taught by infinite wisdom and truth is a true doctrine, If you have not proved this fact, and we think you have scarce attempted it by the proper proofs, your argument is a pure sophism. When we urge that the doctrine of grace, or any other Christian doctrine, is inconceivable, or that it is pregnant with absurd consequences, and, therefore, unworthy of God; this is urged, in strictness, ex abundantiâ; for we do not give up the fundamental point, which is, that the authenticity of your Scriptures, in the whole, and in every part of them, and the truth, by consequence, of your revelation, has not been yet proved. When you suppose the contrary, therefore, in disputing with us, you beg the question about a principle, in order to confirm a consequence. Thus, it seems to me, that the dispute between Euphranor and the minute philosophers would have ended. What I have said upon it can be scarce called a digression; since this comparison of force and grace serves admirably well to exemplify what has been said concerning the art and artifice of the mind, in the proper and improper use of words, to which no determinate ideas are annexed.

SECT. VII.

Many other arts there are, by which the human mind endeavours to help itself in the acquisition and

and communication of knowledge. Some of them are as liable to abuse as these which have been mentioned, and all of them are abused more or less, to the production and propagation of errour; for I presume, from what I have the means of observing, that this would be found true, on a strict examination, even in the applications of geometrical knowledge. But it is time I should put an end to this Essay; that becomes a treatise in bulk at least, if not in matter nor method. That I may not conclude too abruptly, however, even for such a rambling essay; it is necessary I should proceed to distinguish, in a few more instances, between real and imaginary knowledge, the natural powers and the arts, the arts and the artifices of the human mind: and if these instances should lead me further than I intend, you will please to ascribe this prolixity to my love of truth, and to my desire of giving you all the satisfaction I can.

I will observe, therefore, that as the sagacity of the mind has invented various arts whereby to improve the other faculties, and even itself, and to carry their united forces a little further than the immediate lessons of nature carry them; so the affections of the mind have not only turned these arts frequently into artifice, an example or two of which we have seen, but have gone further. They have not only slid imperceptibly, but have plunged openly into artifice; and philosophers, those that I intend here, seem to acquire knowledge only as a necessary step to

errour: when they have done this, when they have lost sight of the former, they grow so fond of the latter, that they esteem it no longer a human, but raise it, by an imaginary apotheosis, up to a divine science; which is, of all others, the most pernicious artifice of the mind, according to my lord Bacon, and according to truth. "Pessima "res est errorum apotheosis, et pro peste in- "tellectûs habenda est si vanis accedat vene- "ratio."

Are these lovers of wisdom, these searchers of truth, you may well ask, nothing better than venders of false wares, venders of hypothetical systems at best, and often of such as are intirely fantastical? I fear that they are: and that the only excuse to be made for them is, that they sometimes deceive themselves first. They put me in mind of a passage in Plutarch, who compares the Stoics to ships that set out under auspicious names, the Success or the Swiftsure, for instance, and who are beaten by tempests in their voyage, or cast away. The great mischief is, that the implicit passenger shares the fate of the unwary mariner. In short, so it is: the most irrational of all proceedings pass for the utmost efforts of human reason; and that philosophy, which pretends to teach us the sublimest truths, serves only to amuse mankind in a middle or low region between truth and errour, knowledge and ignorance.

Let us now resume the division of our ideas into such as are natural, and such as are artificial.

Those

Those of the first sort are such as God appointed them to be; and are, therefore, real human ideas. Those of the second are framed by the mind, sometimes under the direction of judgment, and sometimes under the prevalent influence of imagination; and are, accordingly, sometimes real and sometimes fantastic. Real ideas are defined, by Mr. Locke, to be "such as have a foundation "in nature, a conformity with the real Being and "existence of things, or with their archetypes." Fantastical ideas then are such as have not this foundation, nor this conformity. Now this definition requires a little commentary to make it more clear, and more exact too, if I mistake not, in one part of it at least.

Our simple ideas are all real, whether they be ideas of the primary or of the secondary qualities. If bodies, as some philosophers speak: or, as I had rather say, whether they be such as all body excites in us, like those of extension, solidity, figure, divisibility, and mobility; or, whether they be such as particular bodies excite in us, like those of colours, sounds, smells, tastes, and the whole tribe of tangible qualities. But in our complex ideas of substances, the case is not the same. They must be real, as long as they are conformable to the combinations of simple ideas that exist in the substances which cause them. But they are liable to become fantastical, because it is in the power of the mind to form them, without any regard to existence, and because their reality neither is nor can be founded in any thing

but real existence, actual or past. The reason of this, which Mr. Locke gives, where he treats of the reality of human knowledge, is so obvious, that a very little reflection must suggest it to every thinking man, in the present state of philosophy. The real constitutions of substances being intirely unknown, it is as impossible we should know which of the powers that cause our simple ideas can coexist, and which cannot, any other way than by experience, as it is, that we should know what these powers are. Whenever we frame ideas, therefore, of substances, without being authorised by existence, these complex ideas must needs be fantastical; since they are composed of simple ideas proceeding from powers whose coexistence is, for aught we know, impossible. As obvious and as decisive as this reason is, it has not hindered men from exercising, even on substances, the power by which they boast themselves able to frame ideas of what may exist, as well as of what does exist, or has existed. Thus Plato and others, both before and since his time, have peopled invisible worlds with so much poetical licence, that one is tempted to think of him, who seems to have been above the lowness of superstition, that he was very little in earnest, and meaned rather to amuse than instruct an age, wherein the marvellous was sure to please.

It is the abuse and misapplication of this power, that has opened an inexhaustible source of fantastical ideas and notions, which have been the bane of philosophy, and have infected almost every branch

branch of science. The proofs are innumerable; and the instances that may be produced are liable neither to objection nor evasion among men who join candour with knowledge; two qualifications that are inseparable from the love of truth; that promote one another in the discovery of it; that should always go together, and scarce ever do so. Fantastical ideas and notions of every conceivable kind, and even of substances immortal and mortal, celestial and infernal, divine and human, or amphibious beings, that partake of the two natures, stare us in the face whenever we look into the histories, traditions, and philosophical remains, that are come down to us from the remotest antiquity. The same phænomena appear in all those of the intervening ages: and to say the truth, science, or rather that which passed for science, in many of these, was composed of little else. In these latter ages, even since the resurrection of letters, since the improvement of philosophy and of human reason, several ideas and notions that were principles of imaginary knowledge to the ancients have been preserved in esteem and veneration: as if that, which had no foundation in nature three thousand years ago, could have acquired it since, and ideas, which were fantastical in their minds, could ripen into reality in ours. They are not the less fantastical neither for having been purged of some circumstantial absurdities, and rendered a little more plausible by softenings and refinements. It must be confessed, that how deficient soever the ancient philosophers might be in

in real, they left scarce any thing new to be invented in imaginary science. But they left much to be improved: and this task several of the moderns have executed most successfully. We may say of fantastical ideas in general, what Tully says of one kind of them, that of prognostications by dreams, at the close of his treatise on divination; that the solicitude and fear they cause would have fallen into contempt, if philosophers, who seemed to be perfect masters of reason, had not taken upon them to be protectors of dreams.

But these general reflections would be more seasonable after some that are more particular, and that remain to be made. As far as we have gone, we have seen our way, I think, very clearly: and the distinction between real and fantastical ideas of substances is so well established, that they cannot be easily confounded. The distinction agrees with one part of Mr. Locke's definition; and is founded in the same reason. But there is another part of this definition, which seems too inaccurately expressed in the chapter of real and fantastical ideas, and quite untrue, as well as a little inconsistent with what he advanced elsewhere, according to the explanation of it in the chapter of the reality of knowledge. In the definition it is said, that our ideas are real when they have a conformity with their archetypes. In the explanation it is said, that "all our complex "ideas, except those of substances, being archetypes of the mind's own making, not intended "to be copies of any thing, nor referred to the "existence

" existence of any thing, as to their originals, " cannot want any conformity necessary to real " knowledge." Conformity with what? With themselves? That meaning is too absurd to be supposed. With other ideas of what exists, or has existed? That cannot be intended neither; for these ideas are " not copies of any thing, nor " refer to the existence of any thing, as to their " originals." It remains, therefore, that we understand no conformity whatsoever necessary to make these ideas real, when it is said, that they want not any that is necessary to make them so. Now this proposition I think absolutely untrue. There is a conformity, in the strict sense of the word, though of another kind, as necessary to make these ideas real, as the conformity proper to our ideas of substances is necessary to make them real: and all the complex ideas here spoken of are real or fantastic, as they have or have not this conformity. Thus it will appear, if we do not suffer the word archetypes to perplex our thoughts. If all our complex ideas, except those of substances, are archetypes, they must be applicable, and properly and really applicable, to something; for it is at least as fantastical to frame an archetype applicable to nothing that is really typified by it, as to frame the idea of a substance that can be referred to no real existence as to the archetype of it. When archetypes are made by nature, they determine our ideas, as God, the author of nature, has appointed that they should be determined; and the knowledge we acquire

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by them is real knowledge for us and to all human purposes, whether these ideas do really resemble their archetypes or not; according to what has been inculcated already, and perhaps more than once. But when complex ideas and notions are framed by the mind, to serve as archetypes in it, they must be framed with a conformity to the same nature that determines the others, or they will be fantastical and produce no knowledge, or such as is fantastical like themselves. I do not say, that they must be framed so as to contain nothing which implies contradiction. They have been so framed, indeed, as to imply it on many occasions, by ancient and modern sages and saints. But we will suppose, that they are so no longer: and on that supposition we say, that even this is not sufficient, and that all these ideas must have a closer conformity than that of bare possibility to what we know of the existence of things corporeal or intellectual. Universal possibility is the range of divine particular actuality, passed or present, and that in a very confined system of human intellect.

The ideas we speak of, it is said, are neither "intended to be copies of any thing, nor referred "to the existence of any thing as their originals." If this was absolutely true, all such ideas would be archetypes in a strict sense, and could be conceived no otherwise. But it is not absolutely true. It is rather a definition of fantastical than of real ideas. Our most complex ideas and notions, which combine, in the greatest variety, modes and relations,

relations, as well as simple ideas, are often copies; they are often referred to existencies, to particular existencies, as to their originals: and when they are not so, when they are put together in the mind, as the mind never perceived them put together in existence, though this may be said to be done "by the free choice of the "mind, and without considering any connection "they have in nature," yet are they not, when they are real, quite arbitrary, nor quite void of reference to existence. Mr. Locke shall prove this for me. He says, that one of the ways by which we get these complex ideas of mixed modes is experience and observation of things themselves. In all these instances then, the complex idea is derived from existence, and is a copy first, though it becomes an archetype afterward. It is so in the example he brings, in that of seeing two men wrestle. It is so in a multitude of others, in all those that are real and of real use. Murder is as old as the human race, and theft as property. Shall we believe, that men were lawgivers and moralists before they were spectators of the actions of one another? Invention is another of the ways he mentions, in which, by a voluntary act of the mind, several simple ideas are put together in it, and the archetype precedes existence. But even in these cases, the combinations of ideas ascribed to the invention of the mind are suggested to it by other combinations, as it would be easy to show, in the example brought of printing: and though

though the mind cannot be said to copy, when it has no particular existence in view, yet must it be allowed to imitate, when it has in view not only it's simple ideas, but divers combinations of them, derived immediately or remotely from what exists or has existed in the system of nature: and these it has in view always, when the complex ideas and notions we frame are not purely fantastical. Those of parricide and sacrilege were framed, perhaps, by some men, for they were not by all, before either of these crimes had been committed; and so they might, without doing much honour to the boasted power of knowing à priori and independently of existence. The relation of father and son is added to the complex idea of murder in one: and as soon as one order of men and their property came to be reputed sacred, it required no superior intelligence to foresee, that they might be robbed as well as other men. But the mathematician never saw a circle mathematically true, such as he describes, and whose properties he considers: neither did Tully ever see such an image of virtue as he proposes, and whose principles and effects are explained in his Offices. Be it so. But the mathematician, who considers the properties of a circle, a square, or a rectangle, had observed the various terminations of extension before he turned mathematician, and the moralist had observed wherein the good and evil of society consists, and had framed, on what he observed, ideas and notions concerning virtue and vice, and the perfection of human nature, before he writ of ethics.

ethics. The ideas and notions of both, to be productive of real knowledge, must be derived from existence, and referred back again to it.

According to Mr. Locke, our knowledge "concerning these ideas is real, and reaches things "themselves; because we intend things no farther, than as they are conformable to our "ideas." These ideas then, to be real, must reach things themselves; that is, they must be rightly abstracted from things that exist, and they must be applied to things, no farther than things are conformable to them. This now coincides enough with the opinion I advance. Our ideas are fantastic, and our knowledge imaginary, when the former are framed without a sufficient conformity to existence, and when they are applied to things to which they are not applicable; for as ideas and notions may be void of all reality in themselves, so may they become fantastical by a fantastical application.

The mistake about these complex ideas carries much resemblance to that which Mr. Locke exposes so justly about maxims, or axioms. These have been reputed the principles of science; whereas they are, in truth, the result of it, when they are evident; and cannot pass, therefore, with any propriety, for the præcognita and præconcessa, for which they have been vended in the schools. Just so the complex ideas we speak of are called archetypes; and men infatuate one another enough to imagine, that there is a superior intellectual region, as it were, a region of ideas, that

that are the principles of general scientifical knowledge, from whence particular knowledge is to be deduced, and by which it is to be controlled. Whereas, in truth, all our ideas and notions are fantastical, as all our maxims are false, when they are not founded in particular knowledge: when they are carried further than evidence, the criterion of truth, accompanies them; and, above all, when they are repugnant, as philosophical and theological ideas and notions frequently are, to this very evidence, and to our knowledge of things as they exist.

Something has been said concerning ideas and notions in a former part of this Essay, that may seem to render what is here said about such as are fantastical the less necessary. But having occasion to speak of these, I choose rather to run the risk of repetition (usefully I hope to the great end of fixing the bounds of real knowledge) than not to bring into a fuller view this intellectual artifice, which has served to build up so much imaginary knowledge, at the expense of neglecting the other, and of corrupting it in all it's parts. It was by the means of fantastical ideas and notions, that chemistry was turned into alchemy; astronomy into judicial astrology; physics, by which I understand the contemplation of mind as well as body, into theurgic and natural magic; and the religion of nature into various systems of plain, but almost blasphemous doctrines of absurd mysteries, and superstitious rites. All these effects proceeded from the vain philosophy of men, more intent

intent to imagine what may be, than to observe what is: and, if we add to these such as have proceeded from fantastical notions of abstraction, upon which the tedious and impertinent subtilties of ontology are founded, we shall have before us very nearly the sum of all that learned errour, into which men have fallen by reasoning on fantastical ideas and notions in search of real: as if it was below the majesty of the human mind, to seek for reality and truth out of itself: and as if our senses were given us only to excite our intellect, and not to inform it by experiment and observation.

The principal occasions, on which the mind exercises the artifice spoken of in framing ideas that are fantastical, may be reduced to these three. Philosophers invent hypothetical ideas and notions, in order to erect on them such systems as cannot be erected on real ideas and notions, that is, on ideas and notions that have a known foundation in nature. They treat of ideas and notions that are incomplete and inadequate, as if they were complete and adequate. They dogmatise on obscure and confused ideas and notions, as if they were clear and distinct. Let us produce, in this Essay, one example at least of the first. Your patience and mine too may be worn out by that time: and the examples omitted now may be taken up at some other.

SECT. VIII.

I might have reckoned hypotheses among those arts of the mind that degenerate into artifice; for such they have been often. The greatest part of ancient philosophy, almost all except ethics, was nothing else: and, to mention no other among the moderns, Descartes had much to answer for of this kind. His great reputation put hypotheses into fashion; and natural philosophy became a sort of physical romance. But this manner of imposing imaginary for real knowledge is over, while one more absurd remains in credit; and, while naturalists can slide no longer from art into artifice without being detected, metaphysicians act out in artifice, and they succeed. An hypothesis in physics can make it's way now no faster nor no further, than experience countenances and supports it. But in metaphysics it is otherwise. Their hypotheses stand alone: they stand in the place of experimental knowledge, are not so much as deduced from it by a fair analogy, but are made independently of, and frequently in direct contradiction to it.

They who plead for hypotheses urge, not very unreasonably, that they may be of some use in the investigation of truth, while they are employed; and that they may serve to the same purpose, even when they are discovered to be false, and are laid aside: as men who have missed their way give some instruction to others to find it.

Beside

Beside which they do not so much as pretend that any hypothesis ought to be maintained, if a single phænomenon stands in direct opposition to it. I do not agree to this plea in the whole, but to the latter part of it intirely. By that, the criterion of hypothesis is established by the favourers of them: we take it as they give it; and this criterion in the physical world is real actual existence. The Copernican system, itself, stands on no other bottom. The Newtonian system of attraction stands on the same; and this bottom is grown so broad and so firm, that neither the jokes of foreign wits, nor the cavils of foreign philosophers, can shake it, as far as sensible bodies and sensible distances are concerned. But, at the same time, they who presume to suppose it equally certain, where insensible bodies, the minima naturæ, and insensible distances, are concerned, as some of our countrymen have done, presume too much; this application of it not having been yet enough confirmed: and they have been accordingly justly censured for raising too hastily an hypothesis into a system. With such precautions and under such restrictions, hypotheses can do no hurt, nor serve to propagate errour. But then it is surely a ridiculous scene, to observe how confidently some metaphysical philosophers, who show themselves extremely scrupulous about such hypotheses as I have mentioned, either admit, on the authority of others, or publish on their own, not barely as hypotheses but as demonstrations, the wildest notions imaginable; notions that are

founded in nothing known, nor knowable, and that can be tried, therefore, by no criterion whatever.

I have spoken of physics and metaphysics sometimes in the usual style; but I am far from altering the opinion I have already owned; and cannot, therefore, acquiesce to the pretensions of those, who, under the umbrage of a supposed science that considers general natures, essences, being in the abstract, and spirit or immaterial substance, would place themselves in a rank of philosophical precedence above those who consider corporeal nature in the several phænomena, and would control, what they neglect, particular experimental knowledge. As to the ontosophists, they are the lineal descendants of the schoolmen; and they deal, like their progenitors, in little else than hard words, and such abstract ideas and notions as render our knowledge neither more distinct nor more extensive, but serve to perplex it and to envelope in their obscurity what is in itself very plain. I shall neglect them, therefore, as the rest even of the learned world appears to do. The example I am to produce, under this head of hypothetical ideas and notions, shall be taken from those philosophers who usurp and appropriate to themselves, as if it were their peculiar province, the doctrine of spirits and spiritual things; whereas pneumatics, taken in this sense, if they are any thing, are as truly objects of physics, as pneumatics, taken in a more proper sense, for that branch of natural philosophy whose object

is

is the air we breathe. This distinction, however, has been established; and by the help of it, while naturalists are not at liberty to make hypotheses that are not founded in some degree of experimental knowledge, and that are not liable to be controlled by it, in all their parts and in all their progress, metaphysicians are left at liberty to frame as many fantastical systems as they please, on ideas and notions purely hypothetical, without any regard to this foundation, or this control, as we observed just now.

As soon as men began to reflect on their own nature, and on that of all the bodies which surrounded them, they could not fail to observe solidity, extension, figure, divisibility, and mobility, the most apparent properties of body or matter. As little could they fail to observe the operations of their own minds, in which they had the perceptions of these ideas; and to frame ideas of thought, and of the several modes of thinking, particularly of that which has the power of beginning motion. None of these ideas were contained in their ideas of body, nor necessarily connected with them: and that of a power to begin motion, which they observed to be in the whole animal kind, and which they knew consciously to be the effect of thought, must strike them as a superior property to that of mobility, with which they had occasion to compare it every instant. Taking it for granted then, that they knew, as soon as they began to philosophise, all the perceivable properties of matter, they concluded,

that such things as could not be accounted for by these, were to be accounted for by the properties of some unperceivable or unperceived matter, or else by the properties of some other substance. The first assumption was that of the most ancient philosophers: the other was made much later; at least it was much later that extended and non-extended substance were plainly contradistinguished.

Thus the distinction of body and soul came to be made and established among almost all the philosophers. It would be tedious even to run over the confused notions that were entertained about soul. It was fire; but a divine fire to some: it was air to others: a fifth element to others, "quintam quandam naturam *," and, therefore, Aristotle called it by a new name, entelekia, to signify a certain continued and perpetual motion. "Sic ipsum animum entelekian appellat novo nomine, quasi quandam continuatam "motionem et perennem †." In a word, it was something, they knew not what, which they thought fit to call breath or spirit, for a reason obvious enough: and the notion of it answered philosophical purposes, in metaphysics, just as well as that of occult qualities answered them in physics. A vast profusion of souls followed. They were created by the exorbitant power of hypothesis as fast and as often as they were wanted.

* Tusc. Quæst. † Ibid.

There

There was a universal soul common to the whole system of corporeal being, or a soul of the world; for the world was, in the imagination of some of the ancients, a great animal, and consisted, like the animals it contains, of a body and a soul. There were particular souls for celestial and terrestrial bodies; a soul of the sun, a soul of every star and planet, a vegetative soul for plants, a sensitive soul for other animals; and for man there was an ample provision of three, of the two last and of a rational soul, which was a participation of the Divine mind, or an emanation from it, or an infusion out of it.

If we descend from those times to our own, we shall find the same hypothesis maintained, with a little less confusion of opinions, in more precise and uniform terms at least, but still as unintelligibly as ever. Spinoza, indeed, acknowledged but one substance, and that matter; as absurdly as others have acknowledged but one substance, and that spirit. On the principle of the former, the vegetative, the sensitive, and even the rational soul, can be nothing else than matter, differently fermented and subtilised in systems of it differently organised; for which opinion whatever is said, should be said, and might be said, without admitting the principle of Spinoza in it's full extent; without supposing God a material being, from whence the most absurd consequences would follow; and without denying his existence, which would imply, if that be possible, more. But the

general run of opinion assumes the soul to be a spiritual substance, and a spiritual substance to be unextended, indivisible, and therefore immortal. Now this assumption helps the hypothesis so little, that the extravagancies fancy builds on it are as great, and the difficulties opposed to it perhaps greater, than when the soul was deemed material by some Christian, as well as Pagan philosophers; for that it was so your learned friends will I am sure confess. Many notions, extravagant and fantastical to the utmost, might be cited. Can there be any thing more extravagant, or that implies contradiction more grossly, than to divide this indivisible substance, like the mystic divines, who had a precedent for it in that mystic philosopher Plato, into an upper and lower part? The good madmen mean well, no doubt: but there is reason to suspect, that, among their disciples, the lower part of the soul and the body are much defiled by imagination and sensation too, while the purity of the upper part, where the understanding and the will reside, preserves the conscience in a most heavenly tranquillity.

Should you object to this instance of extravagant opinions, built on the hypothesis of the soul, considered as a simple, unextended being united to the body, because it is taken from those of madmen, who are capable of framing the most extravagant and falsest notions on the most reasonable and evident principles; let us lay aside all other instances, and produce as the most extravagant

travagant of all that wherein every man who deals in theology, mad or sober, concurs; that opinion, for the sake of which this hypothesis of the soul was invented, and which is as little reconcilable to the wisdom of God and to the moral ideas of justice and goodness, as thought is to all the properties that we know of matter. The human soul then, which participates of the divine nature by emanation, by infusion, or by some other incomprehensible act, on account of which alone we are said to be made after the image of God, is confined to the human body, and is diffused through the whole to inform and to govern; or has a principal residence, like the seat of empire, in the pineal gland, or in that part of the brain where I have read that there is a sort of nervous juice, the source of animal spirits, of a most fragrant smell; and which puts me in mind of the perfume that the inspiring divinity spread in the temples where oracles were delivered to the Pagans. While the soul is thus immersed in matter, the lustre of it is obscured by this removal from it's divine original. The force and energy of it is clogged, nay, it seems, since the fall, to contract an inclination to corporeity, and to assimilate in some sort with this inferior nature, as if they were homogeneous. Our first parents received from sensible objects, after their fall, such strong impressions and such deep traces in their brains, "de si grands vestiges, et des traces si pro-"fondes*," that they may well have communicated

* Maleb. l. 2, c. 7.

these

these to the brains of all their descendants. Now the thoughts of the soul, being necessarily conformable to the traces that are in the brain, it is you see demonstrated, most metaphysically, that in this respect the soul is dependent on the body, and it's thoughts and inclinations on the thoughts and inclinations of those who begot the body it inhabits, in a perpetual gradation of generations down from Adam and Eve. Thus the soul, that spiritual monarch of the human system, is subject, not only to a limitation of power, but to a determination to govern ill. The soul does not remain long indeed in this state, because the system it governs is soon dissolved by death. But the short time it remains in it decides of it's state for eternity. It seems to be delivered from the body, and to be restored to the full force of it's nature, and to the free exercise of it's power, in order only to suffer, for the most part, during an eternity, for what it did in the government of the body, when it enjoyed neither during a moment. As soon as philosophers and divines are able to reconcile all this to their ideas of the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God, the hypothesis will be no longer necessary, at least to the former; since they will not find it at all more difficult to reconcile thought to their ideas of the properties of matter.

The task would be endless, and I shall neither give myself nor you the trouble to enumerate more of the fantastical ideas, notions, and opinions, that have been raised on this hypothesis of a simple

a simple immaterial active being, which understands and wills, or by which we are made able to understand and will. I make this distinction, because philosophers who set out from the same goal take very different ways in the pursuit of ideas equally fantastical. Some of them banish out of the whole extent of being every thing, except ideas and spirit, whereof we can have no idea, and which is only known by consciousness. Nothing in Heaven nor Earth, none of those bodies which we repute to be sensible objects, have any existence out of some mind or other. They may exist eternally, and be always actually present in an eternal spirit; but they have beside this no existence, except one that is occasionally communicated. They exist in created spirits, when they are perceived; and they cease to exist, when they are not perceived there. Other philosophers again declare the existence of body hard to be proved; while that of spirit, under this notion of it, needs no proof, according to them. They pretend to have a knowledge of immaterial spirit, that excludes all doubt, and they assume hypothetically, that there is such an entity as body, which is the very reverse, I presume, of the most evident dictates of common sense. But however, on this bold assumption, that there is such a being as body, they proceed to account for the union of the soul with body on one hand, and with God on the other; and so multiplying hypothetical ideas one on another, they open a fantastical scene of science, wherein every man's imagination (for every

man

man has the same right to imagine) is his sole guide, and wherein it is plain, from their extravagant writings, that they have, and from the nature of the thing, that they can have, no other guide.

Descartes, who might not so much as dream, perhaps, that philosophers would set themselves in good earnest to banish body out of the universe, and the universe with it, affirmed two substances; one whose essence is extension, and to which all the modifications of extension belong, and one whose essence is thought, and to which all the modifications of thinking belong. Now both these definitions are so evidently false, that every man may know them to be so, who considers them without philosophical prejudice, of all prejudices the strongest. How strong it is, appears in this very instance; for when Descartes affirmed extension alone to be the essence of body, he was led by his philosophical prejudices to affirm an identical proposition and to beg a question. He affirmed, that body is body, for he supposed the plenum. It is true, we cannot separate body in our ideas from extension, neither can we conceive body exclusively of solidity. But we can separate extension from solidity in our ideas; and therefore, as Mr. Locke observes, if it be a good argument, "that spirit is different from body, because "thinking includes not the idea of extension in it, "space or extension alone is not body, because it "includes not the idea of solidity in it." In short, they are so evidently distinct ideas, that he who confounds them in words must discern their difference

ference in his understanding, whether he will or no. The difference is so evident, that if the plenum was admitted, and pure space rejected, yet still the definition of the Cartesians would be imperfect; for the essence of body, throughout this imaginary plenum, could not be extension alone. Solidity could not be banished out of it, but extension would continue to include solidity, as solidity is allowed to include extension; and extension and solidity would be two distinct ideas, but two essential properties of the same substance still.

The definition of thinking substance is not truer than this of extended substance, and the falsity of it is obvious to constant experience. That we live, and move, and think according to certain human modes of thinking, and that there must be something in the constitution of our system of being beyond the known properties of matter to produce such phænomena as these, are undeniable truths. But here certainty ends. What that something is we know not, and surely it is time we should be convinced that we cannot know it. Thankfulness and modesty would become us better than philosophical and theological assurance: thankfulness, when we look up to the great Author of all natures, for raising ours, either in kind or in degree, above that of any other animal; and modesty, when we look down on ourselves, to avow our ignorance. Instead of this, vanity and presumption determine philosophers to conclude, that since they cannot account for the phænomena

of

of the mind, by what they know very superficially of solid extended substance, this mind must be some other substance. On this foundation they reason admirably well à priori, and prove with much plausibility, that this mind, this soul, this spirit, is not material and is immortal. In the same manner they proceed, and well they may, to prove any thing that metaphysics and theology want to have proved. But this foundation is an assumption, that cannot stand an examination à posteriori, and that, if it could stand it, would carry us but one step forward in knowledge; for if nothing which is an object of real knowledge could be opposed to the immateriality and immortality of this substance, the insuperable difficulty of accounting for the action of mind on body, and of body on mind, that are reciprocally and in their turns both active and passive, would stop our philosophical inquiries. The divine alone would have made a step sufficient for his purpose. Thus do the reputed masters of human reason advance propositions as demonstrated truths, which have not even the merit of a tolerable hypothesis. But it is not enough to affirm like them. I must prove what I say, by appealing to that criterion of truth, from which there lies no appeal; to clear and determinate ideas, duly abstracted from the phænomena of nature, and to an intuitive knowledge of their agreement or disagreement. Now this, I think, it will not be hard to do.

I do not pretend to deny the possible existence of

of spiritual, that is, according to the present notion, of immaterial beings. I have no more right to deny that there are such, than the persons just mentioned have to affirm it. God alone, the Author of all beings, knows how many different kinds of substances, how many various sorts of beings, his omnipotent will has made to exist. But this I say, that we have not the same proof of the existence of unextended and spiritual, as we have of extended and solid substance. We have not the same proof, because we have not the same knowledge on which to ground any. We guess, probably, if you please, from what we observe of our own minds, that one exists; but we know, as certainly as God has given us the means of knowing outward objects, that the other exists. The ideas we receive by reflection are in this case and in this respect equivocal, they do not reach up to the apparent nature of the substance that causes them. But the ideas we receive from sensation are not so; they do reach up to the apparent nature of the substance that causes them. The former do not so much as constitute what Mr. Locke calls a nominal essence: the latter do. There are many questions to be asked, no doubt, concerning body, which it is impossible to answer, as well as concerning spirit; because we are made incapable of knowing the real essence of any substance; and if there was no other difference, we might as well affirm the existence of immaterial as of material substance. But there is another

other difference; and it is not enough to have hinted it, I must explain it.

Mr. Locke takes much pains to show, that the notion of spirit involves no more difficulty nor obscurity in it than that of body*: and yet I think I can make him prove the contrary for me, and show, against his own assertion, that we have "more and clearer primary ideas belonging to bo-"dy than we have belonging to immaterial spirit." Primary ideas are the ideas of such qualities as exist always in the substance to which they belong, whether they are perceived or not. They are, therefore, essential to it, and productive, by their operations, of those secondary qualities which may be said only to exist in our perceptions of them. Of the first sort are solidity and extension, to mention no others, the primary qualities, and, in our ideas, the essence of matter, of which we can frame no conception exclusively of them. These notions I have taken from Mr. Locke, and they lead me to ask, what the primary ideas are of spirit or immaterial substance? The primary idea or the essence of it is thought; as body is the extended, this is the thinking substance, says Descartes. Thought then, actual thought, is the essence of the soul or spirit, and by consequence so inseparable from it, that we cannot conceive the soul or spirit to exist separately from or exclusively of thought. But this I know to be un-

* Essay, l. 2, c. 23.

true:

true: and I may well own, since Locke has owned the same, that I have "one of those dull souls, that "does not perceive itself always to contemplate "ideas." I distinguish very well between being asleep and being awake. I continue to live, but not to think during the soundest sleep, and the faculties of my soul and body awake together. Thus evidently do I know, that thought is no more the essence of soul, than motion of body: and if thought is not so, I ask what is?

Body is capable of receiving and communicating motion by impulse; but without solidity and extension it would be capable of neither. Thought, not being the essence of the soul, can be nothing but an action of it, and thus far answers motion in body. But what is it then which answers solidity and extension, and is the primary quality of spirit? Is it immateriality? Is it the negation of material essence? No man will, I presume, give so silly an answer. At least no man, who does, must expect a reply. He who affirms, that there is in the composition of the human system a substance to which cogitability belongs, as well as a substance to which mobility belongs, must have ideas of the first of these substances prior in the order of nature to that of it's cogitability, as he has ideas of the second prior in the same order to that of it's mobility; or he must talk at random, and affirm what he does not know. His supposed distinct substance must sink into nothing, or be confounded with the other; for it will cost a reasonable mind much less to assume, that a sub-

stance, known by some of it's properties, may have others that are unknown, and may be capable, in various systems, of operations quite inconceivable by us, according to the designs of Infinite Wisdom, than to assume, that there is a substance concerning which men do not pretend to know what it is, but merely what it is not.

It may be said, Locke has said it, that we know no more of the solid than of the thinking thing, nor how we are extended than how we think. But the comparison is improper and unfair. It is improper, because it compares the operation of an assumed substance with the known properties of a real substance. It is unfair, because it slides over and evades the objection, that we have not a positive idea of any one primary property of spirit, or at least, that, if cogitability be such a primary quality, this definition of the soul is no better than that of a movable substance would be, if it was given as the full definition of the body. But besides, though the cohesion of the solid particles of body be not sufficiently accounted for by the pressure of the air, or of any ambient fluid, and though that seeming property of matter, which is called, for want of a better name, attraction, be not yet perhaps enough established; yet we have a very clear idea of cohesion in it's effects, by which insensible atoms are so united and held together that the bodies they compose become sensible to us, and give us the ideas of solidity and extension. Have we any knowledge proportionable to this,

this, as imperfect as it is, of soul, under the notion of an immaterial spirit? It cannot be said that we have. Upon the whole, therefore, we may conclude, without presumption, against two of the greatest men of their age, against Descartes, that thinking is not the essence of the soul; and against Locke, that a solid extended substance is not quite so hard to be conceived as a thinking immaterial one.

But Locke, much less dogmatical than Descartes, how far soever he favoured the reigning opinion, or thought it necessary for him to keep measures with those who support it, was far from asserting the immateriality of the soul. He found inducements of probability to this and to the contrary opinion, certainty of demonstration for neither*. When he is to show, that our knowledge is narrower and more confined than our ideas, he brings the instance of these two, of matter and thinking, and of the impossibility of knowing, by the contemplation of them, or by any other way, except by revelation, whether that which thinks in us be not material. He sees "no contradic-
"tion in it, that the first eternal thinking Being
"should, if he pleased, give to certain systems
"of created senseless matter, put together as he
"thinks fit, some degrees of sense, perception,
"and thought." He endeavours to guard against theological choler, by urging, "that the great ends
"of morality and religion are well enough se-

* Essay, l. 4, c. 3.

" cured without philosophical proofs of the soul's " immateriality, since it is evident, that he who " made us—sensible, intelligent beings can," and he adds, " will restore us to the like state of sen- " sibility in another world." But all this precaution could not save him from the joint attacks of philosophers and of divines, not very orthodox on other points. They * have insisted, since thought is not the essence of matter, nor an attribute of matter neither, in as much as it does not flow necessarily from that essence, it cannot have been communicated nor superadded, even by omnipotence, to any system of matter; because essences are unchangeable, and attributes uncommunicable; so that matter cannot be made to think. The moment any system begins to think, it ceases to be material: and that which was matter becomes a substance of another kind. In fine, that it is nonsense to assert, that God " can † super- " add a faculty of thinking to incogitativity, of " acting freely to necessity, and so on ‡." It is hard

* Leibnitz, Wollaston, &c.

† Rel. of Nat. delineated, § 9.

‡ Since it has been observed on this occasion, in how trifling a manner the pretended masters of abstract reasoning subject the reality of things to words; it may not be improper to observe another fallacy, that runs through all their discourses concerning the thinking substance.

When we know with certainty that any being exists, many doubts may be raised, we may endeavour to solve them by hypotheses, and we may endeavour it in vain: but still they will be no more than difficulties to the solution of which our knowledge does not extend. The known truth will remain unshaken.

hard to say, whether in these and other common-place reasonings on the same subject there is more presumption,

unshaken. On the other hand, when we assume on probable arguments, that any being exists, the doubts and difficulties that arise are real objections; because they are probable arguments opposed to probable arguments, and the whole being hypothesis, the whole may be shaken.

Theists demonstrate the existence of one supreme, infinite, all-perfect Being. Atheists cavil; and though they cannot unravel the demonstration, they oppose doubts and difficulties, as if probable arguments, supposing these to be such, could prevail against demonstration. Their proceeding is absurd: and reason is evidently on the side of the theist. But now, are they, who assert a distinct thinking substance united in the human system to a material unthinking substance, in the case of the theists? Are they who deny this, in the case of the atheists? Certainly not. The former, except a few who are in the height of a metaphysical delirium, do not pretend that they can demonstrate by reason what they maintain, and yet they argue as if they had made this demonstration. This is the fallacy I mean: and I need not go far to seek an instance of it, since I find one in the Religion of Nature delineated, that follows the passage I have quoted.

This solemn author then, in his third argument for the immortality of the soul, drops the question, whether it be immaterial or not, on which he had pronounced so dogmatically a few pages before, and asks, only by way of objection, "whether that soul, be it what it will, which ceases to think when "the body is not fitly disposed, can think at all when the body "is quite dissolved?" Now to this question he proposes to give an answer, of which he speaks modestly and diffidently, and yet presumes it may be turned "even into an argument for the "immortality of the soul."

This answer comes out to be nothing better than a string of suppositions. He, who says, that the power of thinking is a faculty superadded by the Creator to certain systems of

presumption, or trifling and playing with words in a solemn dogmatical tone. They amount to no

matter in various degrees and proportions, assumes indeed, but he assumes conformably to the phænomena. He, who says, that thought is the essence of a distinct substance united to certain systems of matter, because he cannot conceive how matter can be made capable of thinking even by omnipotence, assumes without any support from the phænomena, nay even in an apparent contradiction to them. Every instance, therefore, of this contradiction is a good argument in favour of the former, and against the latter opinion. No matter. The pneumatic philosopher proceeds as if his first proposition was proved, and he had only a few difficulties to remove, rather than objections to refute; as if his doctrine wanted only to be explained. He explains it no more than he invented it on the foundation of that which actually is, but on what he thinks may be; and so he may argue on, if he finds men idle enough to dispute much with him, as long as his imagination can supply fantastic ideas and notions.

The very question, whether the "soul, which ceases to think "when the body is not fitly disposed, can think at all when the "body is quite dissolved," supposes that there is a soul, that is, a distinct substance united to it, though this neither has been nor can be proved. The answer sets out by supposing, that this distinct substance is a limited being, limited, obstructed, clogged by the body. Even here we might interrupt this licentious maker of hypotheses, and insist that it is not congruous to reason to assume, that a substance, which is immaterial, according to him, which has none above it except the substance of God himself, according to St. Austin, and by which we are made after the image of God, according to all those who maintain the same doctrine, for he must not be suffered to slide over any of his or their extravagant assertions—is limited, obstructed, clogged by that material substance, by which we are allied to the beasts of the field, and made after the image of other animals.

But

no more than this. We metaphysicians and ontosophists have fixed the essence of matter. It can

But to pass by this, the soul then is "limited, it's activity "and faculties being more obstructed and clogged at one time "than another, and most of all in sleep, or a deliquium." The eyes, the two windows of it's prison, are shut, and the nerves which receive the impressions of outward objects, and convey sensations to the soul, are benumbed. This branch of knowledge is cut off, therefore, in such circumstances, and thought cannot be exercised on objects, that do not present themselves to the soul. But why then is it not exercised on the ideas and notions that the soul is possessed of already, in the contemplation of which it has no need of sense; so much otherwise, that detached from sense, and wrapped in pure intellect, the soul meditates and reasons with greater intenseness and clearness about these abstract ideas and notions?

If you ask this question, you will be answered by other suppositions. You will be told, that the use of words is necessary even in abstract meditation, that this silent language depends on memory, and that memory depends on certain tracks which are made on the brain. You will be told, that these tracks are the characters of that book, wherein the soul must read to think in this manner; and that when the characters are overcast by vapours, or any other way darkened, the soul can read them no more till the cloud is dispelled. You may object, that thinking cannot be, on this hypothesis, the essence of the soul, or that the soul must cease to be what it is every time we fall into sound sleep, or faint intirely into a deliquium, and return to be what it was before, every time we awake, or come out of the deliquium; which differs little from assuming a perpetual creation of souls every twenty-four hours at least. There is something so very ridiculous in this notion, that I should be ashamed to mention it, if it did not follow necessarily that of a substance whose essence is thought, and who does not always think, and if it was not of use to show, in every

can be no other than is represented in our abstract ideas, those eternal natures independent of God

instance, as it occurs, the monstrous absurdities in which the reasonings of these metaphysicians are apt to terminate.

The metaphysician we have to deal with here screens himself from the imputation of this absurdity, as well as he can, by a change of terms. He asserts only, that the soul preserves a capacity of thinking, "even in those circumstances in which "it thinks no more than if the body was destroyed:" And from hence he assumes, that "it may, and will preserve this "capacity when the body is destroyed, cut to pieces, or moul-"dered to dust." He asserts the first on the evidence of the phænomena. He assumes the last, without any possible evidence from them, nay with a strong presumption derived from them against him. While we are alive we preserve the capacity of thinking, I should rather call it the faculty, just as we preserve the faculty of moving, and other faculties plainly corporal, subject alike to many impediments and many infirmities of the body, in which the faculty of thinking has the largest share, as it might be shown in various instances, in that of madness particularly. When we are dead, all these faculties are dead with us: and the sole difference that we make in our judgments of the one and the other arises from hence, that we imagine the capacity or faculty of thinking to belong to a substance distinct from the body, concerning which the phænomena can show us nothing after death; and concerning which, by consequence, metaphysicians and divines think themselves at liberty to say whatever they please. You would smile, if you heard any one say, that the man who has preserved the faculty of walking, after having lost and recovered frequently the use of his legs, will for this reason walk eternally. But you hearken very gravely when you hear another say, on as little knowledge, that he will think eternally; because he has preserved the capacity of thinking, after losing it in the whole or in part, on so many occasions.

How

God himself. If you suppose it modified or mixed in any system, so as to be no longer inert and

How much soever we may deem the thinking and unthinking substance to be distinct in nature, still it will be true, that these assumed souls were given to inform bodies, and thereby complete the human system. The system would be too imperfect to answer any conceivable purpose of making it, if either of them was wanting. Without thinking, the body would be unable to begin motion, and to perform many necessary corporal operations. Without a body, the soul would be unable to acquire the first elements of knowledge, the materials of thought. In short neither of them could exist and act in a state of total separation from the other. Wollaston was so sensible of this, that he supposes it; and in order to maintain, that the soul does not cease to exist when the body does, notwithstanding this admission, he retails to his readers an old trite chimera of the Platonic philosophy, which has been mentioned above. He assumes, that the soul has another body beside this which perishes. "Some fine vehicle "that dwells with it in the brain, and goes off with it at "death." This innermost body, which may be compared to the shirt of the soul, receives impressions from the outward body, which may be compared to it's great coat: and as those impressions of sensible objects are communicated to the shirt, so the shirt communicates them to the soul, who sits enveloped in it in the brain. On the other side reciprocally, the soul being thus put into motion, produces motion in the "contiguous spirits and nerves, by moving it's own vehicle, and "so moves the body." When the great coat is worn out, or destroyed by any accident, the soul flies in it's shirt away into the open fields of Heaven, and thus undressed as it were, the impressions that were made mediately by the nerves are made immediately on it; thus it becomes, "as it were, all "eye to visible objects, and all ear to audible, and so on."

I might have explained this hypothesis further, with Mr. Wollaston's help, but my patience would not serve me; though he thinks it contains nothing impossible, and therefore nothing

and senseless, it is no longer conformable to our ideas: it is therefore no longer matter, such as it came out of the region of possibility into that of actuality;

nothing but what may be. Many things are, he says very truly, by ways which we do not, nor can understand. But then this plea is not to be admitted in every case alike; for if it was it would go a great way to screen the false theories which philosophers are apt to frame both in physics and metaphysics. A primum mobile, an element of fire, were names invented to signify things which have no existence; and such was the word soul, perhaps, in philosophical consideration, if we take it not for a faculty superadded to the human corporeal system, but for a distinct substance united to it, and cooperating with it. But metaphysical figments imposed longer than physical; because there is more room for Wollaston's plea, and because hypotheses may be heaped on hypotheses with less control in one, than in the other.

I might add, that this figment of a soul, if it be a figment, received strength from the superstitious theology of the Heathens. Nothing can confirm and consecrate notions, however erroneous, so much: and this philosophical notion was incorporated into theology from the first. Legislators and magistrates, poets and priests, as well as philosophers, enforced it with all their authority: and the event has been a proof of this great truth, that "the understanding is as subject to the "impressions of fancy, as to those of vulgar notions *."

I might observe further how little it became Wollaston, who would not believe that thinking is a faculty added by the Creator to certain systems of matter, because he could not reconcile this opinion to his ideas of matter, though this opinion is conformable to all the phænomena of the mind; how little, I say, it became him, and must become any other man who reasons in the same way, to urge, in defence of all his hypotheses and paradoxes, that many things are by ways which we cannot understand.

* Bacon.

But

actuality; it is another substance, and must be called by another name. God cannot make our ideas of incogitativity to be ideas of thinking, nor our ideas of necessity to be ideas of acting freely. To such reasoners it would be, I think, sufficient to say; learn that human knowledge is derived from existence: and that to be real, it must be conformable to things as they exist. Conform your ideas, therefore, to them, and pretend no longer to control or to determine particular existence by abstract notions. As long as matter is senseless and inert, it is not a thinking substance, nor ought to be called so. But when, in any system of it, the essential properties, extension, solidity, &c. are maintained, that system is material still, though it become a sensitive plant, a reasoning elephant, or a refining metaphysician. It would be nonsense to assert, what no man does assert, that the idea of incogitativity can be the idea of thinking; but it is nonsense, and something worse than nonsense, to assert what you assert, that God cannot give the faculty of thinking, a faculty in the principle of it intirely unknown to you, to systems of matter whose essential properties are solidity, extension, &c. not incogitativity. This term of negation can be no more the essence of matter, than that other, immateriality, can be the essence of spirit. Our ideas of solidity

But I will detain you no longer about such discourse as would convince you, if you heard it at Monro's, that the philosopher who held it was a patient of the doctor, not yet perfectly restored to his senses.

and

and extension do not include the idea of thought, neither do they include that of motion; but they exclude neither: and the arguments you draw from the divisibility of matter, against it's cogitability, which you deny, might be not ill employed against it's mobility, which you admit, as I suppose.

SECT. IX.

It has been said, that this boasted science about soul or spirit has not the merit even of a good hypothesis, though it pretends to be demonstrated. You may, perhaps, begin to think so. But in order to be the more convinced of this, it may not be time mispent to reflect, before we leave the subject, on the sole means we have of acquiring any knowledge of this kind, and to consider how far these means can carry us in the inquiry.

That all our knowledge of corporeal substance must be founded in the experience we have of our own, and in the experiments and observations we are able to make on other bodies, will not be denied in the present state of philosophy. As little can it be denied, that all our knowledge of soul or spirit must be founded, to be real, on what every man may know by intuition of his own soul or spirit; for we cannot contemplate other souls, as we can other bodies. Hypotheses may be made about either, but they must be made in both cases under the same restrictions. When they are designed only to amuse the mind with a sort of analogical appearance of probability, and pretend

pretend to be nothing more than physical and metaphysical romances, they are surely very innocent, and employ our time better, at least, than most of our other amusements do; and yet, even then, they must contain nothing that is absolutely repugnant to the phænomena. But when they take a more serious air; when they pretend to be founded in some knowledge and to lead to more; and, above all, when they pretend to be not so much hypotheses, as demonstrated systems; it is not enough that they be barely reconcilable to the phænomena. The phænomena must confirm them; or they must be rejected, on what authority soever they come recommended. Authority has been extended very far in theology and philosophy, from the time when those names were first assumed, and perhaps long before. Plato having spoke in that Pythagorical rhapsody, the Timæus, about the visible gods, the gods made to be seen, "qui tales geniti sunt ut cer-"nantur," that is, the celestial phænomena, he proceeds to speak of dæmons, that is, of invisible spiritual natures: but of these he confesses himself unable to speak on the strength of his parts, or on his own knowledge; for which reason he has recourse to tradition, and to the authority of the ancients, who were born of gods, and knew their parents extremely well. "Priscis "itaque viris in hac re credendum est, qui diis "geniti parentes suos optimè noverint." These men we must believe, he says, though the things they have delivered down be not confirmed by

conclusive, nor even by probable reasons. "Licet nec necessariis nec verisimilibus rationibus "eorum oratio confirmetur." On such respectable authority did the divine Plato vend, to his own and to future ages, all the mysterious nonsense that Pythagoras and he had imported from the Egyptian and eastern schools of theology and philosophy. But if this might be borne in a theology that pretends to be revealed, and ought to be submitted to in one that proves itself to be so, it is intolerable in philosophy; for in all the parts of that, in the very first, in natural theology, human reason, that is, common sense, is the sole judge; and the greatest doctor has no more right to impose his authority on me, than I have to impose mine on him. I do this justice, therefore, to Plato; I do not believe he was in earnest, when he set the example: though I believe that many great divines and metaphysicians have been in earnest, when they have followed it.

If men had consulted the phænomena of their own minds alone, which can alone afford us any means of acquiring knowledge of spirit or thinking substance, instead of hearkening to such idle traditions, and raising chimæras of their own upon those of other men; if they had proceeded in the analytical method, from particulars to generals, as far and no farther than the former justified the latter; it seems to me that they could scarce have imagined the substance of soul absolutely distinct from that of body; nor have created an habitual reverence for an opinion so ill founded

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in appearances. They have pursued another method, which has brought them, after two or three thousand years, to this paradoxical dilemma; they must either maintain the hypothesis of two distinct substances, and explain in some tolerable manner, which they have not yet done, the union and mutual action on one another of unextended and extended beings; or they must deny the absolute existence of any thing extrinsical to the mind, and maintain, that God did nothing more, when he created the world, than give a relative existence to things; that is, make objects perceptible to his creatures which had existed eternally in the divine, and acquired then a new existence in the human mind, but had no other; that he created finite spirits, in short nothing else; spirits to perceive, but nothing to be perceived, except his eternal ideas; that there is no material world, but that the intellectual world is made perceivable by us, according to an order that God has established. Was I obliged by the terrours of an inquisition to embrace one of these two hypotheses, I confess freely, that I would embrace the last, strange as it is, as the least inconceivable in itself, and the most convenient in it's consequences. But the method taken to frame them revolts me against both.

This method we find recommended very emphatically in several places, and on several occasions, in the works of Plato: and I choose to give it you, or at least some general notion of it, according

according to the exposition of Marsilius Ficinus*, his best interpreter and commentator. First then, of bodies there are several sorts; æthereal, that is, celestial; aërial, such as ghosts wear; and terrestrial, such as we wear during our lives. We cannot have experimental knowledge of the two former; and experiment and observation are not proper means of arriving at knowledge even of the latter. Corporeal objects dim the sight of the soul: to know them we must look off from them, and must not expect to discover any truth concerning them, unless we have recourse to the ideas of things. "Nisi ad ideas confugiamus." Of souls, in the next place, it is extremely hard to know the substance in this life, because we perceive it, "sub corporeâ specie," under a corporeal appearance, and are apt to think in a corporeal manner. The surest way, therefore, to comprehend it, is to proceed by moral purgation, and metaphysical abstraction. "Ideoque tutissimam "rationem ad animam comprehendam esse tum "moralem purgationem tum metaphysicam ab-"stractionem." And if all this will not do, some revelation is necessary, "opus est divino quodam "verbo." One would think, however, that it should do; since, by intenseness of meditation, a philosopher may abstract himself from his senses and his imagination, according to Plato, and employ his mind wholly about incorporeal natures

* Marsil. Fic. argum. Phæ. et alibi.

and

and ideas, to which it becomes united by this abstraction; and, since in this state he alone has wisdom and knowledge, though being, as it were, out of himself, extra se "positus," he is laughed at by the vulgar as a madman. You smile, perhaps; but reflect a little on the systems (so we will call them civilly for once) of some modern philosophers about body as well as spirit, on their method of reasoning, and on the dogmatical language they hold upon subjects the most remote from human apprehension; and you will not think that I do them any wrong in comparing their manner of philosophising with that of the founder of the academy, his mysterious masters, the Egyptians, or his enthusiastical scholars, the latter Platonists. Let us then leave those, who think themselves able to arrive at superior knowledge by some such methods as these, to be happy in their own imaginations; and let us rather pity than blame them, when they treat our real, though imperfect knowledge, as a chimæra, and the chimæras of their own brains as real knowledge. But then let these purged, these purified, these illuminated spirits, who have a constant communication by ideas with the supreme spirit, allow us, who have none of these advantages, nor any conception that they have them, to pursue quietly the acquisition of a little human knowledge by human means.

We have clear and determinate ideas of what we call body, by sensation, and of what we call spirit, by reflection: or to avoid cavil as much as

may be, without giving up common sense, we have such ideas by sensation as the various powers of that substance, called body, are ordained to produce in us, and we have such ideas by reflection as the inward operations of that which we call spirit, be it substance or faculty, excite in us. We are able to contemplate these ideas naked, if I may say so, and stripped of the dress of words. How far then does the contemplation of these ideas carry us towards knowledge, or how high do we rise by it in the scale of probability? That is the only question, which a reasonable man, who is content to know, as God has made him capable of knowing, will ask. The answer must be to this effect. Philosophers talk of matter and spirit, as if they had a thorough acquaintance with both, when in truth they know nothing of either beyond a few phænomena, insufficient to frame any hypothesis. The atomical system, which Leucippus took perhaps from other philosophers, which Democritus took from Leucippus to improve it, and which Epicurus took from Democritus to corrupt it, has been revived with great reason. But yet we must not talk of matter as if we knew it in these first elements or principles of it, and abstractedly from all the forms under which we perceive it. These original particles, in which the nature of it consists, and on which the constitution of it, under all it's forms depends, are far beyond the reach of any analyse we can make, of any knowledge we can acquire. Whether these particles be uniform and homogeneous

homogeneous, or whether they be of different kinds, different even in substance as well as in size, figure, and other circumstances or accidents, is as much unknown to the proudest dogmatist as to you or to me. Nay, whether many of these original particles may not be endued with active principles, such, for instance, as cause fermentation in some and cohesion in all bodies, is a point that none of them can determine: and yet one need not scruple to say, that the affirmative may be assumed on better grounds than their hypotheses are, notwithstanding the repeated din of inert, senseless, stupid, passive, and similar epithets, which they ring in our ears whenever they speak of body or matter. Their whole discourse, when they go beyond a few apparent properties, whereof we are fitted to have ideas, and which have been already discovered, is one continued petition of principle, and grows as nauseous, though not so mortal, as the crambe of Juvenal.

Body or matter is compounded and wrought into various systems before it becomes sensible to us. We behold some that are indeed inert, senseless, stupid, and in appearance merely passive. But we behold others that have vegetative life, juices and spirits that circulate and ferment in them, by which they are nourished, and by which they grow. They have not the power of beginning motion, but motion, which is renewed in them after it has intirely ceased, and both by causes as material as themselves, continues in them, and

they live, and move, and propagate their species; till their frame is dissolved by age or sickness, or some external violence. We behold others again that have animal life, and that go from rest to motion, and from motion to rest, independently of any outward cause that determines such effects by a physical necessity in this case, as we observe to be done in the former. We discover, by the help of microscopes, an immense variety of these animal systems. Where they begin, God alone, their Creator and ours, can tell: and it would be as impertinent to ask this question, as it is to demand what "the degree of fineness, or the alteration in the situation of it's parts, is, at which "matter may begin to find itself alive and cogitative*?" They who defend so ill their own hypotheses would do well to be less dogmatical and supercilious, when they attack those that seem probable to other men. Wherever these animal systems begin, their beginning and the principles of their composition are alike unknown. All we know is, that they are; and all we suppose is that they are material beings, to which no Cartesian, nor any philosopher, who does not deny the existence of body, will, I presume, object.

As these animal systems come to be more and more sensible to us, and as our means and opportunities of observing them increase, we discover in them, and according to their different species, or even among individuals of the same species, in

* Rel. of Nat. delin. § 9.

some

some more, in others fewer, of the same appearances that denote a power of thinking in us, from the lowest conceivable degrees of it, up to such as are not far, if at all remote, from those in which some men enjoy it. I say some men, because I think it indisputable that the distance between the intellectual faculties of different men is often greater, than that between the same faculties in some men, and some other animals.

If now we are to form a general conclusion from all these concurrent phænomena, without any further reasoning about them than such as they justify, what must it be? It must be plainly this, that there is in the whole animal kind one intellectual spring common to every species, but vastly distinguished in it's effects: that though it appears to be the same spring in all, yet it seems to be differently tempered, and to have more elasticity and force in some, and less in others; and that, beside this, the apparent difference in the constitutions and organisations of animals seems to account for the different determinations of it's motion, and the surprising variety of it's effects. If the plain man, who has formed these general conclusions, on particular observations and experiments, should be asked the trite question, whether he conceives that matter, however figured or moved, subtilised or fermented, can be pleasure or pain, desire or aversion? To answer truly, I think, he must answer, that he cannot conceive matter to be any of these, nor even how a system of matter becomes capable of having any ideas,

affections, or passions, any more than he can conceive how a multitude of other phænomena can be as he perceives evidently that they are. But that he has pushed his inquiry as far as the true means of inquiry are open, that is, as far as the phænomena can guide him; that he cannot draw any other conclusion from them than this, that all animal systems are material; and that he must content himself with this, unless some other can be drawn from the same phænomena.

The philosopher is not so content. If physics will not serve his purpose, metaphysics and theology shall. "Ad ideas confugiendum est;" and since the particular phænomena of the whole animal system lead to a conclusion he dislikes, he resolves not to be determined by them, but to reason, without regard to them, from his own abstract ideas; and from these he draws a conclusion as inconceivable as that which he rejects. The plain man owns himself unable to explain how material systems think, though their phænomena are so many positive proofs, that oblige him to conclude they have this power. The philosopher decides negatively on such proofs as his abstract ideas of matters furnish to him, that no system of matter thinks, that Omnipotence cannot any way communicate to it the faculty of thinking, and positively, that whatever thinks is a simple being, immaterial, indissoluble, and therefore immortal. The plain man has recourse once more to the phænomena, and objects, that we must be

reduced

reduced, if we receive this hypothesis, to assert that other animals, beside men, have immaterial and immortal souls; or that no other animal, beside man, has the faculty of thinking. The immaterialist is far from contending for the first: and the materialist cannot admit the latter, in opposition to the phænomena: in opposition to which no hypothesis is admissible.

There seem to be but three ways to get rid of this objection. Each of them has been tried, and each of them is a different hypothesis. By one, this knot and a multitude of others are cut asunder very easily; for it consists in asserting roundly, that there is no such thing as material systems, nor matter, nor any existence out of mind, eternal or created, as we have mentioned already. All observations of the phænomena, which suppose such an existence, are, therefore, deceptions according to this scheme: and it would be ridiculous to attempt proving that other animals, beside men, think, to one who denies that these animals exist, or even that he and the man who should dispute with him exist, in the sense in which existence is universally understood.

As these philosophers take body from men, there are others who not only take thought from the rest of the animal kind, but reduce them to the state of automates or machines. Whether Descartes advanced this paradox in good earnest, and really doubted whether other animals had a power of thinking or not, it is impossible to determine. That he should be in earnest it is hard to conceive; since any reasons of doubt, which

he might have in this case, would have been reasons of doubt in the case of other men, who may give more, but cannot give more evident signs of thought, than their fellow-creatures. But we may persuade ourselves, very easily, that Malebranche maintained the same paradox in very good earnest; since it has a nearer and a more favourable relation to his own whimsies, and to some theological tenets, than is commonly observed. Thus the same thing, which happens to liars, happens often to men who seek the truth very sincerely; but imagine too lightly that they have found it, when they have only made an hypothesis, and that they know things as they are, when they only guess how they may be. One hypothesis wants another to support it; that a third, and so on, till philosophy grows to be what it has always been, an aggregate of motley systems, partly real and partly fantastical.

These two paradoxes have not maintained much credit in the world. Men continue to be persuaded, that there are mountains and rivers, and trees and animals: and I apprehend that this vulgar notion will continue to prevail. Just so they believe still, that there is some difference between the parish clock and the town bull; that the shepherd's dog perceives and wills, as really as the shepherd himself; and that the philosopher's horse knows the way to his stable, as well as the philosopher knows the way to his study. They will not be sufficient, therefore, to remove the plain man's objection, and recourse must be had to the third hypothesis, which compounds matters a little

a little, and is a little more plausible in appearance, but in reality less defensible than that of Descartes: one stands in direct opposition to the phænomena, but the other contradicts itself. The hypothesis I mean is that, which assumes a rational soul in man alone, and a sensitive soul alone in all other animals.

He who should have read all that has been written on this subject, from Aristotle down to the author of the Preestablished Harmony, and who should have meditated ever so long on these writings, would find it a very hard task to give a full, and an impracticable one to give an intelligible account of what he had found there; so confused, so obscure is this labyrinth of hypotheses. I shall not set my foot far into it; for philosophers, according to their usual practice, have reasoned and disputed in this case to no other purpose, than to render diffuse and intricate what lies in the narrowest compass, and has really no difficulty in it, if we know where to stop.

In order to avoid that paradox, which some, at least, of the Stoicians held, and which Gomez Pereyra and Descartes renewed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; and to maintain at the same time the superiority of the human nature, not only in degree but in kind too, this notion of a sensitive soul has been advanced, or rather continued and enforced; for it descends to us from the same springs, from which so many other absurdities have flowed. The distinction between souls and images of souls, "animæ et animarum simu-

"simulacra," might lead to it. But there are other passages in Plato, that favour it more directly. Aristotle spoke less figuratively and more clearly on the subject; for he bestowed sensation, memory, and the passions on other animals, and reason on man exclusively. On this principle the schoolmen and all the Peripateticians have proceeded, and it is at this hour the reigning opinion among sound divines. There cannot be, however, a more unsound doctrine, if extreme absurdity can render it so; for either they who maintain it suppose the sensitive soul to be a middle being between body and spirit, or they do not. If they suppose it so, they suppose it to be neither extended nor unextended, neither material nor immaterial; and we have no idea of any other substance. If they do not suppose it to be so, they affirm, without knowing it, what they mean to deny; for they must admit (unless philosophers have a right to contradict the inward as well as the outward phænomena, and intuitive as well as sensitive knowledge) that the power of thinking, that very power whereof we are conscious, is as necessary to the perception of the slightest sensation, as it is to geometrical reasoning. There is no conceivable difference in the faculty or power: the sole difference arises from the degree in which it is or can be exerted. It has been asked, will you deny the power of God to create a substance capable of sensation only, and not of reason? No man living has higher notions of the divine omnipotence, nor carries them further than I do. An

argument, fairly drawn from the power of God, will determine me at any time and on any occasion; though it does not determine these men who insist so much upon it, when they hope to make it serve their purpose by an unfair application of it. I am persuaded, that God can make material systems capable of thought; not only because I must renounce one of the kinds of knowledge that he has given me, and the first though not the principal in the order of knowing, or admit that he has done so: but because the original principles, and many of the properties of matter, being alike unknown to me, he has not shown me, that it implies any contradiction to assert a material thinking substance. This now, which implies no contradiction, except it be with their precarious hypothetical ideas, these great asserters of the divine power deny. But at the same time they draw another argument, unfairly, from this very power, by assigning it as the cause of an effect, which does manifestly imply contradiction. It implies contradiction manifestly, to say that a substance, capable of thought by it's nature, in one degree or instance, is by it's nature incapable of it in another. God may limit the exercise of this power, no doubt, in his creatures, variously, according to their different organisations, or to the imperceptible differences that there may be in the atoms that compose their bodies, or by other causes absolutely inconceivable. This happens to other animals: it happens to men, and the largest understanding is limited in the exercise of it's mental faculties

faculties. But a nature capable of sensation, that is of perception, that is of thought (to say nothing of spontaneous motion, of memory, nor of the passions) cannot be incapable of another mode of thinking, any more than finite extension can be capable of one figure alone, or a piece of wax, that receives the impression of one seal, cannot receive that of another.

We may apply very justly to those who have maintained the doctrine of sensitive and rational souls, and to those who have made new hypotheses concerning them, as well as concerning the apparent reciprocal action of body and mind, what Bacon says of the Greek philosophers, "impetu tantum intellectûs usi sunt, regulam non "adhibuerunt: sed omnia in meditatione acri, et "mentis volutatione et agitatione perpetuâ, posuerunt." It must be confessed, that some of the moderns have been guilty of this as well as the ancients, and, I think, with less excuse; because experimental philosophy has been more in use, and the means of acquiring knowledge of this kind have been more common in our days. Notwithstanding this, we have seen men of the greatest name neglect, sometimes intirely, at their first setting out, to inquire into the nature of things spiritual or corporeal, an exact and sufficient observation of the phænomena; and still oftener, contenting themselves with a transient view of particulars, hurry on to general knowledge, according to the natural propensity of the human mind, without having this rule, if I may say so, in their hands; or else bending it to their abstract

notions

notions, instead of squaring these scrupulously by it. It seems that the great author himself, whose censure I have just quoted, does something of this kind, in his fourth book of the Augmentation of Science, where he makes a distinction between rational and sensitive souls. The latter he affirms to be a material substance, "planè substantia corporea censenda est," without perceiving that this cannot be, unless matter can be made capable of thinking. This soul he assigns to brutes, according to the received notion. According to the same, he supposes the rational to be a superior soul in men, without perceiving, that the supposition of these two souls is as absurd, as that of an upper and lower part in the same simple and indivisible being. He concludes by hinting, that the sensitive soul in man may be considered as confounded with and lost in the rational, "ipsa anima rationalis et "spiritus potius appellatione quam animæ indi-"gitari possit;" without perceiving, that we may just as well confound the rational with the sensitive, as the sensitive with the rational soul, and that if nothing can think which is material, that which thinks in other animals must be immaterial; or if any thing can think which is material, that there is no pretence to conclude that which thinks in man to be immaterial. I am afraid, therefore, that the inquisition which he recommends in this place, and which seemed to him to be almost wanting, "quasi desiderari videtur," must have been pursued, on his principles, under the influence, not of one, but of all the four kinds

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of false ideas and notions, the "idola tribûs, "specûs, fori, et theatri," which he has named, not without some of the affectation prevalent in his age; and which must, in all ages, render it hard for truth to enter into the mind, and to be apt to disturb the progress of it when it is there.

This hypothesis, and the others of fresher invention, are like the armed men of Cadmus; they kill one another: not one survives the rest. Affectation of superior genius and knowledge had decoyed men, no doubt, into the scenes of fantastical ideas and notions: but it must be confessed, that they have been forced into them likewise, in some degree, both by interest, another interest than that of truth, and by invincible prejudice. There are certain opinions fixed by authority; an authority that deserved no respect in it's original, and that could never have imposed by itself; but one that custom renders sacred, and that acquires by subsequent authorities, and by circumstances foreign to it, an importance, in the whole, or in part, which nothing else could have communicated to it. My Lord Bacon himself observes to this purpose, and he might have applied the observation to himself, on this and other occasions, that the greatest genii have suffered violence in all ages; while out of regard to their own characters they have submitted to the judgment of their age, and of the populace: so that time, like a river, has brought down light and tumid errour, while solid and weighty truth is sunk to the bottom, and is dived for by few. Thus the notions that prevail about soul, spiritual substance, and spiritual

operations

operations and things, took their rise in schools where such doctrines were taught as men would be sent to Bedlam for teaching at this day. Their inward doctrine, for they had two, might be more reasonable, perhaps; but we cannot wonder if that which was taught to a few, and which the few kept secret, was soon lost; while the outward doctrine, which was taught to whole nations, and glared with symbols, allegories, and parables, or philosophical fables, was preserved. Some of these doctrines are come down to us: and it is probable, that they have lost nothing of their primitive extravagance in the writings of Plato, through which they have been conveyed principally; since there never was a more wild or less consistent author in prose or verse.

In the confusion of fantastical ideas and notions, which the introduction of the Platonic philosophy into Christianity occasioned or increased, as I shall show at large hereafter, and on more occasions than one, that of a material soul seems to have prevailed at first; at least it is certain, that the most zealous writers for Christianity maintained it, or supposed it. The notion, however, of its immateriality was soon and more generally established. Plato, their great master in metaphysical pneumatics, gave them, in his vague and figurative manner of writing, sufficient foundation for either of these opinions: and the last seemed the most favourable to that of the immortality of the soul. From that time to this, whoever attacks one is supposed to attack the other, and is clamoured

moured against, accordingly, by every one who affects a strict orthodoxy, without observing, or perhaps though he does observe, that the opinion of the soul's immateriality adds no strength to that of it's immortality; nay, that by resting it too much on the former, they weaken the latter, and build on a principle which they can never make intelligible, when they might assume another very intelligible and quite sufficient for their purpose. Now these opinions being thus united, their union being confirmed by the authority of the whole Christian Church, and the belief of it inculcated by the process of education, the ideas of immateriality and immortality become so intimately associated in the minds of men, that many can no longer separate them when they commence philosophers; and that those, who see that, if immateriality may be said to imply immortality, it will not follow that immortality, in this case, implies necessarily immateriality, choose rather to keep terms with errour than pass for heterodox. Thus prejudice and interest conspire to put philosophers under a necessity of maintaining, that the soul is an immaterial being, and, in order to maintain it, of inventing the most extravagant hypotheses. When they have once agreed, that twice two make five, they may well assert, that twice four make ten.

The plain man, a much better philosopher in the true sense of the word, keeps out of this confusion; for he pushes his inquiries no further than the phænomena lead him, nor presumes to affirm any

any proposition, that is not suggested and confirmed by them. They do not lead him far in his inquiries about spirit, but they lead him surely. Corporeal nature affords men a fund of knowledge, such as it is, which they can never exhaust. We acquire our first ideas from hence, and by industry and experiment it is in our power to acquire more, and to improve this kind of knowledge daily. How much it is so appears in the vast improvements, that have been made since experimental philosophy has been cultivated. The plain man will be apt to ask, why a proportionable improvement has not been made in that knowledge which is called metaphysical? And I think he will give himself this plain answer, that men have in one case means in their power, that are proportioned to their ends in some degree, and that they have them not in the other, in any degree, though they proceed fantastically as if they had. That there are corporeal natures we have sensitive knowledge. That there are spiritual natures, distinct from all these, we have no knowledge at all. We only infer, that there are such, because we know that we think, and are not able to conceive how material systems can think. We are conscious of certain modes of thinking, of certain faculties and operations of what we call mind, and of certain inward emotions which we ascribe to the mind, and which we call affections and passions. This is some degree of knowledge, no doubt, and it might be improved to conduct better our understandings and

out lives too. But then the principles of it, the mental phænomena, are few; and, beyond those that are obvious to immediate reflection, there are none to be discovered. There are neither microscopes nor telescopes to assist our inward sight, and neither geometry nor algebra can be of any real use in this part of natural philosophy: whereas, in the other, the vast scene of corporeal nature, which will never be quite opened, is always opening to human industry. We discover frequently new phænomena, or we connect and improve our former observations: and every step of this kind is an advancement of science. These reflections may serve to explain, how it has come to pass, that philosophers have made such a mighty progress in the knowledge of corporeal nature, even within little more than a century; whereas this knowledge of spiritual nature is no greater now than it was three thousand years ago, and than it will be three thousand years hence, if the generations of men continue so long.

Men were conscious, ever since their race existed, that there is an active thinking principle in their composition: and the first reflection they made, as soon as they began to reflect on what passes within them, could not fail to be this, that there is a mutual influence of body on mind, which shows itself first, and of mind on body, which appears a little later. With this knowledge men of common sense have contented themselves in all ages; while philosophers, those men of uncommon sense, have filled their own heads, and

the heads of all who have hearkened to them, in every age, with fantastical ideas and notions, on which they have erected hypotheses, repugnant to one another, as well as to the phænomena. It would be astonishing, if it was not so common, to see men advance hypotheses, sometimes with no regard, and often with very little, to those phænomena whereof we are able to acquire sensitive knowledge alone: but that they should do the same thing in cases, where every man has the same intuitive knowledge of the phænomena, might be deemed impossible; and yet both are true. The distinction between sensitive and rational souls, and the immateriality of the latter, had been long established: and the schoolmen, who spun their cobwebs of philosophy, as well as theology, out of their own brains, had settled most accurately the bounds of each, when Descartes arose: a great genius, surely. The French, a little like the Greeks, "qui sua tantum miran-" tur," affect to speak of him as if he had first dispelled the mists of ancient philosophy, and taught mankind both to inquire and to reason. But our Verulam, as great a luminary as he, perhaps a greater; one more useful, certainly, in the advancement of knowledge, had appeared before him, to dispel these mists, and to put the clew of experiment into our hands; to deride contentious logick, and to distinguish between fantastick and real, the knowledge men had, and the knowledge they wanted, in every branch of human science. The English and the French sun both had their spots: and if they dispelled some mists, they

raised others. The great obligation we have to them is, that they set us in the way of discovering their errours, as they had discovered those of other philosophers.

Descartes saw what the schoolmen had not seen, that a sensitive soul, capable of all the functions, and endued with all the faculties that they, or their master, Aristotle, allowed to belong to it, must be capable of thinking by it's nature, and therefore in every respect as well as these; and that all their distinctions were without differences, and mere arbitrary suppositions. If he had stopped here, he had defeated them, and not exposed himself to be defeated in his turn. But it did not become the majesty of his philosophy to leave any thing unaccounted for, how deeply soever hid, to speak like Pliny, in the majesty of nature. He therefore assumed two substances, the extended and the thinking substance. But as soon as he had done so, two difficulties presented themselves; one, arising from the precise definition he had given of the soul, more obviously, at least, if not more strongly, than from the vague notions of the Peripateticians; and the other, concerning the mutual action of mind on body, and of body on mind, arising as obviously and as strongly from his as from the common hypothesis, which were in effect, as to the rational soul, the same. Descartes, therefore, thought fit to make two other assumptions; one, that since beasts must either not think at all, or have souls like men, whose essence is thought, they should have no souls at all, but be reduced to be material automates.

Such he made them: and such they continue among his disciples, as far as it is necessary they should be such, to make his system consistent with that of Christian divines. It is, in truth, more favourable to them than their own; for, beside other absurdities that attend the notion of a sensitive soul, the perpetual creation and annihilation of so many souls, as all the animals and insects of the world require, was a consequence that formed an objection the more against the notion. Descartes sweeped all these souls away at once, and the objection with them. The other assumption that this philosopher made, by the plenitude of his power in hypothesis, was this; that, since he had established a heterogeneity between the soul and the body, more absolute than that which there seemed to be while a sensitive soul was placed, like a middle being, between them, and since their mutual operations on one another became consequently more inconceivable than ever, this reciprocal action should be no longer admitted, however conscious of it men might imagine themselves to be. Volition, for instance, is made, by this Cartesian hypothesis, the occasional, not the efficient cause of the motion of body; and the impression of an outward object on our organs is made the occasional, not the efficient cause of the sensation that our minds perceive. God is the sole efficient cause in all these cases. He acts directly and immediately, according to the laws on which he has established this strange union between soul and body. A strange union it must needs be!

and one would be tempted almost to think, that it is indifferent whether the soul resides in the body it is supposed to inform, or any where else: since, united as they are, there is no immediate intercourse between them, nor any other than that which is carried on mediately by the Supreme Being, who is every where present, and may therefore be determined to act by a mind on a body, and by a body on a mind, how remote soever from one another. If we speak with the vulgar, with whom it is more reasonable to speak, and to think too, than with philosophers, on some occasions, we must say, that the death of Pyrrhus was the effect of a tile falling casually on his head. But if we speak with the Cartesians, we must say, that the passing of Pyrrhus before the old woman's window was the occasion, which determined God to make her see him; that on this second occasion, the sight of him, God impressed a sentiment of anger and vengeance on the old woman's soul; that on this third occasion, the sentiment of anger in the old woman's soul, God moved her arm to throw the tile; and that on this fourth occasion, the falling of the tile, God broke the skull of this fighting king of Epirus. This extravagant hypothesis would provoke laughter, if it did not provoke horror, as I think it must in the mind of every sincere theist*.

* Since there are those who dogmatise boldly about God's manner of being and of knowing, it is no wonder, that there should be those who dogmatise also about his manner of causing, and about the œconomy of his providence in the government of the world. When they assume particular providences,

The makers of hypotheses have not stopped here. Leibnitz arose soon after Descartes, and if the second did not equal the first in real, he outdid him and every other philosopher in fantastical knowledge. He rejected the old opinion, that the soul and body are so constituted and so united by God, as to influence and to act really on one

the instances they bring are often ridiculous: when they speak in general of occasional causes, the instances of these, which force themselves upon the mind, must needs raise horror in every man who believes a God. These doctrines are impertinent in their origin, and abominable in their consequences. If Descartes had not made, on his clear and distinct ideas, and his lively inward sentiment, such definitions as could not be reconciled to the universal experience of mankind, he would have been under no difficulty, except that of owning his ignorance, in a case wherein every philosopher was not less ignorant than he. But rather than not make a new hypothesis, without a sufficient regard to the phænomena first, and rather than not maintain it, even against them, afterward, the Supreme Being was brought down, "sicut Deus in machinâ," to deliver this puzzled philosopher out of the perplexity wherein he had involved himself. I would not think of God at all, though he ought to be always present to our thoughts; I would refuse to acknowledge and adore him in the contemplation of his works, though I do it from the bottom of my heart; much sooner than I would look on him as the immediate efficient cause of every sensation of human minds, and every action of human bodies. Shall I believe that it is God, who impresses those frantic sentiments of devotion, which an Indian idolater feels on the sight of his idol, and who determines the body of this wretch, on the occasion of these sentiments, to fall under the wheels of the processional car, and be crushed to death? Shall I believe that it is God, who moves the arm of a parricide, when he plunges a dagger into his father's

one another. He rejected that of the French philosopher likewise, which has been just mentioned. He did not prostitute the divine agency, by making God the immediate efficient cause of every effect, that body seems to have on mind and mind on body, as they happen in the human system. But he employed the divine power and wisdom in another manner, and once for all, as it were. According to him, every soul has a certain series of perceptions, desires, volitions, &c. Every body a certain series of motions, that are determined by the mechanical dispositions of the machine, combined with the various impressions of outward objects that may be made on it. I do not enter into the difference he makes between the human system, and the general animal system, in which he supposes that the same souls have been united to the same organised bodies from the creation, and that these animals do not, properly speaking, die. In the respect in which I quote this wonderful hypothesis here, the case of all these systems is the same. In every one of them

heart, or that of some low rogue, when he picks a pocket? The consequences are horrible: and an hypothesis that should lead to them, even less directly than this of Descartes does, would deserve to be rejected with the utmost indignation. Many of the most extravagant opinions entertained by the Heathen were capable of being reconciled to an awful sense of the monarchy of the Supreme Being. Such opinions as these cannot be so: and Christian philosophers and divines have done more to debase our notions of this Being, than all the doctors of polytheism.

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the soul and body do not correspond because they are united, but they are united because they corresponded by a preestablished harmony antecedent to their union; and in which Leibnitz found, no doubt, that sufficient reason, which is in all cases the reason that the hypothesis requires. Soul and body are united like two tallies, that fitted one another before their union; but with this difference, which makes the metaphysical case the stronger, they were so fitted separately and independently of one another. Bounce felt pain when she was kicked, if Bounce was ever kicked: and so she would have felt it, if she had had no body at all in the same moment. A fair day invited you to walk in your garden; Bounce galloped after you: and so you both would have done, if you had had no souls at all. This hypothesis gives me no horror: and every time it comes into my thoughts, I laugh as if I was at a puppet-show.

That of father Malebranche must not be forgot in this place. It stands between the other two in one respect: it is neither so horrible as the first, nor so comical as the last. But it is, I think, the strongest instance that can be produced of a fine genius wrought up to a degree of madness by metaphysical speculation and hypothetical enthusiasm, unless the African bishop, St. Austin, may be compared with him. Malebranche then specifies certain manners, in which we may have ideas of outward objects; the first of which is agreeable to the phænomena, and to the common

mon notion derived from them, and the last of which is his own wild hypothesis. He even ventures to assert, that there is no other manner in which we can have ideas of these objects. The assertion is a bold one; since it assumes, that God cannot ordain any system of body and mind which we cannot comprehend. On this foundation he proceeds to show, how insufficient all the other ways are of accounting for these ideas, and to introduce his own. If I was to enter into a detail of particulars, it would be easy to show, with the help of Mr. Locke's examination, and even without this help, that the hypothesis consists of little else than words, that have absolutely no meaning; than figurative expressions, that cannot be applied to his subject, without the utmost absurdity; than inconsistencies and palpable contradictions. But I believe this will appear to be no unjust charge, even by the very little I shall say. His hypothesis in short is this. We cannot perceive any thing, that is not intimately united to our souls. Our souls are unextended beings in this place, though in another he says they have extension, a narrow one indeed; but narrow or broad it is still extension. Now there being no proportion between the soul and material things, these cannot be united to it, nor, consequently, be perceived by it. Our souls are, indeed, united to our bodies; but there is a manner of union necessary to perception, and another not so, neither of which is explained. God, who is a substance, and the only intelligible substance, is in-

intimately united to our souls, by his presence. He is the place of spirits, as space is in one sense the place of bodies; and since he must have in himself the ideas of all the beings he has created, (for without these ideas, that is, without our manner of knowing, this philosopher presumes to affirm that he could not have created them) we may see these ideas in God, as he is pleased to show them to us: but the good father having no where explained how God shows them to us, he leaves us in the same ignorance in which he found us. It has been observed, that this hypothesis bears some resemblance to that of Democritus, who assumed that our ideas are God. One idea, that which we have of God, is, I am sure, by this hypothesis, God himself; since it is affirmed, that this idea is uncreated. The words are worth quoting.—" On ne peut pas con-" cevoir que l'idée d'un être infiniment parfait, " qui est celle que nous avons de Dieu, soit " quelque chose de crée." I might mention a multitude of other notions quite unintelligible or repugnant to our clearest ideas and most certain experience; such as these, for instance, that we have the idea of infinite before we have the idea of finite, and that we think of all being before we think of any particular being; but I have said enough to show, that although this writer has destroyed the intentional species of the Peripatetics, (for he dwells chiefly on our ideas of sight) yet he has left it just as possible, and vastly more probable, that God has ordained certain ideas in the

the mind[1] to be excited by certain motions of body, in a manner incomprehensible by us, than that we see these ideas in his substance in a manner alike incomprehensible.

I imagine, that the plain man is by this time pleased to see common sense force men back, after a tedious round of philosophical rambles, to the very point from which he has never stirred; for so it must do, unless we renounce this gift of God, in favour of human authority. The authority may be great; but the greater it is, the more strongly do these examples of errour show, how little the greatest, how absurd the wisest, how ignorant the most learned of men become, when they presume to push beyond the bounds, that God has set to human inquiries. There is so much warning given, the high road to knowledge is so direct, and the bounds of it are so strongly marked, that they who go out of this road in the vain hope of passing them by a shorter way, as well as they who do not stop when they are conducted no longer by the phænomena, but hope that metaphysics can carry them forward when physics cannot, are inexcusable.

Fontenelle, in the eulogy he made of Newton before the French Academy, compares Descartes with him. He says, that "Descartes, taking a "bold flight, meaned to place himself at the "source of all things, and to make himself master "of the first principles of them, by some clear "and fundamental ideas, that he might have no-"thing more to do, than to descend from thence "down

" down to the phænomena of nature, as to nece-
" ssary consequences." He says, " that the other,
" more timid or more modest, set out, leaning on
" the phænomena, that he might by their means
" remount to the unknown principles of things,
" which he resolved to admit, whatever the chain
" of consequences showed them to be. One," says he, " sets out from what he understands clearly,
" to find the cause of what he sees. The other
" sets out from what he sees, to discover the
" cause, be it plain or obscure." He concludes by saying, " that the evident principles of one
" do not always lead him to the phænomena, such
" as they are, and the phænomena do not always
" lead the other to principles evident enough."
I have quoted this passage at length; because, as much perplexed as it is by an artful abuse of words, it will serve much better to set in a full light the truth I would inculcate, than to constitute an equality of merit in natural philosophy between Descartes and Newton. I will make, therefore, a short commentary on it. The design of the former, as it is here represented, was not a bold flight, but an extravagant undertaking. It is honour enough to the latter, that he made greater advances towards the first principles of things than any of those who went before him: and this would have been honour enough for Descartes too, if he could have acquired it. This philosopher might have clear ideas; for ideas that are false may be very clear perceptions in the mind, and especially in the mind of one who reasoned

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on a certain lively inward sentiment of evidence, as well as on ideas really clear and distinct. But fundamental ideas, if there be any meaning in the word, he could have none, or none that were sufficient in the method he pursued. Many of those he employed, to make himself master of the first principles of things, could be only hypothetical, since he did not frame them on the phænomena, nor connect them by the phænomena, according to Newton's method; which was not timid, but wise as well as modest. What an immense distance was there between any thing he could understand clearly in his method, and the causes of what he saw? And how could the intermediate ideas be framed? Nay, how does it appear, that he understood clearly the things which he is said to have understood so, and from which he set out, when he took extension alone to constitute the essence of matter, and thought alone that of soul? Is it not plain, that his evident principles were assumed, as they often are, purely for the sake of what was to follow? Descartes might, in his method, invent, as he did, whatever principles imagination suggested to him, and, with the ostentatious appearances of a complete system, show us a universe of his own, not of God's making. Newton resolved to invent none; for he resolved to admit such only as he should be led to discover by a chain of consequences, that carried him up to them, imperfectly, perhaps, but surely; such as God made them to be, not such as he guessed they might be. The one might and did

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fall into errour. The other could only fall short of the knowledge he sought. He fell short of it. Like Columbus, he discovered a new world: and like him, he left the discovery to be pursued by others. Our knowledge of nature can so little be complete, that the very appearance of a complete system is a reason, perhaps, to suspect it of being etched out by fancy. Let us suppose a philosopher to arise, and to pursue the discoveries of Newton with equal success. Let us suppose that, by dint of experiment and geometry, he confirms the doctrine of attraction or gravitation, not as a property, not as an attribute of matter, if you will, but barely as a new phænomenon, and that he discovers a new kind of pulsion, or some other physical cause of it. Attraction, which gives us now the idea of a cause, and which may be, notwithstanding all the silly abstract reasoning to the contrary, a real property of matter, will give us then the idea of an effect, as this new cause must do in it's turn, as soon as some farther cause is discovered; and as that further cause must do likewise, as soon as some other still more remote is brought to light. Thus we shall be always seeking, and always to seek. But is this to recal the occult qualities of the schools? Fontenelle makes himself, not Newton, ridiculous, when he does more than insinuate this reproach in the same eulogy. If Newton's philosophy had terminated, like that of the scholastics, in occult qualities, it would not have risen in reputation as fast as it was understood: and if that of Descartes

cartes had not been too often, like theirs, merely hypothetical, and extravagantly so, it had not been demolished on so many sides as fast as it was examined.

But I return to observe, that the comparison between these two methods is to be applied to our researches about spiritual as well as corporeal nature, and to confirm what I have said concerning them. When I consider how little knowledge the phænomena give us of one, and that we are not able to go by their help a step beyond the first appearances, while we extend our knowledge of the other wider, and carry it higher in the order of causes; I am ready to think, that God, who leaves us in many cases to collect his will, as he has made us able to collect it, from his works, shows manifestly, in this case, how repugnant it is to the designs of his all-wise providence, that we should attempt to acquire knowledge of soul or spirit; and how conformable it is to these designs, that we should employ our industry and penetration to acquire knowledge of body, terrestrial and celestial; in order to promote in general the advantages of human life, and those particularly that result from an adoration of the Supreme Being, in a contemplation of his works.

It has been said, it is a commonplace topic, that Infidels, for such is every one called by some men who does not subscribe to all they advance even without proof, are desirous to keep God at a distance from them, whereas they ought to consider, that it is "in him they live, and move, and "have

" have their being." This charge cannot be laid justly against any man who believes a God; for a God, without the attributes of an all-perfect Being, cannot be the Supreme Being, how inconsistently soever some of the ancients might reason about the Divinity. For my own part, I am firmly persuaded, that there is a Supreme Being, the fountain of all existence, by the efficacy of whose will the whole universe was made and is governed, as well as preserved; in a word, who is the first efficient cause of all things, and on whom all his creatures depend. But for this very reason, and because I have this awful sense of the Supreme Being, I do not presume to familiarise myself with him, as the men who bring this charge are apt to do. That he is the first efficient cause, I acknowledge; but I am on my guard against those who presume to penetrate further into the machinery of the universe, and the order of second causes, than the phænomena, that is, than his works, shed a light on their inquiries: or who are so bold as to deny the efficiency of second causes, because they are not able to account for them, and who employ the first cause on every occasion, for whose action they are as little able to account. This is a common practice, and it has produced a sort of profane and even blasphemous enthusiasm in philosophy. Descartes, Leibnitz, Malebranche, our friend, perhaps, and all those, who, not contented to know, what they may know in some degree, the things that are, make hypotheses of what they can know in no

degree, how and why these things are as they are; all these men, I say, have run into this practice, and have spread the enthusiasm.

Our inquiries into the nature of things, and into their causes, may be stopped in two different manners. They may be stopped or delayed by the difficulties that are in the way, or by the want of some of those extraordinary genii, that are sent into the world now and then, to penetrate into the secrets of nature, and to unfold them, as it were, by degrees. Few of these men arise. They are as rare as comets, or any of the less frequent phænomena that they observe: and when one of them has made a certain progress, if he is not interrupted in it by death, it often happens that he stops in his philosophical career, as if his strength were spent. The course is long as well as difficult. Relays are necessary, if I may say so, to carry knowledge even to the human goal: and they are not always at hand. When inquiries are thus stopped, and yet the progress that has been made shows that which remains to be made, other men are encouraged to proceed: lucky incidents may happen to shorten their labour, and the intended discovery may seem to be only delayed. This is, I suppose, the case of the longitude: and we cannot doubt but that it is so of many other objects of philosophical inquiry.

But our progress is absolutely stopped, instead of being delayed only, in many more instances: and in these it is that all efforts are vain, and all industry, for that reason, impertinent. I will explain

plain myself on this important point as clearly as I can. Beside the general idea we have of a universal relation of cause and effect between the Supreme Being and his works, all the phænomena give us particular ideas of the same relation. It is evidently in the system of divine wisdom, that they should do so; and the use of it in all the affairs of human life is manifest. Every phænomenon is a cause to us, when it is considered relatively to those that appear to be the effects of it. Every phænomenon is an effect to us, when it is considered relatively to those that appear to be the causes of it. Thus God has willed, that things should be perceived by us: and if we could discover the whole chain up to the first effects of Almighty efficacy, such they would appear, I presume, to us. But humanity cannot soar so high, and approach so near the throne of God; though the sieur de Fontenelle assures us, that Descartes took his first flight thither, at least, since he directed it to the source and to the first principles of all being. As far as we can acquire ideas of the phænomena, and are able to compare them, and to proceed by induction from them, so far, and so far only, are we able to acquire the knowledge we are so fond of, the knowledge of causes, of corporeal causes, that I may keep to the usual distinction, from the corporeal phænomena, and of spiritual causes from the spiritual phænomena. When we can acquire no more of these ideas we are at the end of our line of knowledge, in either kind: and as this happens sometimes after a long

process of inquiry, so it happens sometimes at our first setting out.

But this is not all. As our discoveries of the phænomena, by which we acquire ideas of second causes, are thus variously limited, so there is another uniform and universal limitation of our knowledge concerning them. Whatever knowledge we acquire of apparent causes, we can acquire none of real causality, by which I mean neither mode nor modal entity, according to the jargon of the schools, but plainly that force, that power, that virtue, whatever it be, by which one being acts on another, and becomes a cause. We may call this by different names, according to the different effects of it; but to know it in it's first principles, to know the nature of it, would be to know as God himself knows; and, therefore, this will be always unknown to us, in causes that seem to be most under our inspection, as well as in those that are the most remote from it. This knowledge, however, is that which philosophers mean to attain, or it is impossible to say what they mean in many cases, and for want of which they employ so familiarly the first efficient cause on every turn. They are doubly ridiculous. They seek, and pretend to discover causes, when they only suppose phænomena; and when they have discovered a real actual cause in it's effects, by the phænomena, they reject it, because they cannot conceive its causality, nor assign a sufficient reason why and how it is as it is.

If all the objections to Newton's system were

answered; if the facts and calculations were over and over confirmed, a disciple of Leibnitz would still maintain, that there was no sufficient reason for attraction, as an essential property, or as an attribute of matter: and that it could not, therefore, be admitted as a cause, how much soever appearances might favour such an opinion; since nothing must be admitted to exist unless philosophers are able to show the sufficient reason of it's existence, and to explain it's causality. Well might attraction be exploded by these philosophers, since extension itself run some risk, and had been certainly denied to be an essential property of matter, if Leibnitz had not discovered the sufficient reason of it in nonextension. His monades, in this system, may be called immaterial atoms, as properly as he calls souls immaterial automates, in his system of a preestablished harmony: and his reasoning in both will appear intelligible to none but his implicit disciples; as his letter to the chemists, who searched for the philosopher's stone at Nuremberg, which procured him admission into their society, was intelligible to them, though he did not understand it himself.

It will be agreed, I think, that, on the supposition I have made above, attraction would pass, in every mind untouched by the delirium of metaphysics, for a sufficient cause; though the sufficient reason of it could not be given, nor the causality of it be explained. Now I would ask, whether the conscious knowledge we have of the

reciprocal action of body and mind be not founded in greater certainty than the knowledge we should have of this conatus accedendi, this mutual tendency of body to body? It must be allowed to be so. I would ask, therefore, since he who should deny in this case the attracting, gravitating power to be a property of matter, would deserve laughter instead of attention, as much as he did while he doubted in the same manner of extension, till the sagacious Leibnitz had found the sufficient reason of it in nonextension, or rather in nonentity; I would ask, I say, what he deserves, who denies the reciprocal action of mind and body, because he knows no more than that there is such an action, and because he is unable to discover by what powers, and in what manner this action is produced.

If we are conscious that we think at all, we are conscious that we perceive ideas, and that we will actions. We are conscious, in one case, that the cause is without us, and the effect within us. We are equally conscious, in the other, that the cause is within us, and that the effect passes without us. In one case, where we have only a sensitive knowledge of the cause, though we have an intuitive knowledge of the effect, we may be deceived as to the former. The stick in the water may be straight, though we perceived it crooked : and the tower at a great distance from us may be square, though we perceived it round. I choose these trite examples, which have been employed by all those who would persuade us to distrust our senses,

senses, those inlets of all our knowledge, and which prove for me, on this occasion, better than for them on the occasion on which they urge them. We try our perceptions over and over again; we rectify by experience the deceptions to which they are liable: and all these perceptions, the false as well as the true, confirm the opinion, if it may be called merely an opinion, that they are caused immediately by outward objects acting on our organs, whether we will no, in consequence of particular principles or powers utterly unknown to us, and conformably to general laws, some of which we are able to discover. In the other case, where we have intuitive knowledge of the cause, and only sensitive knowledge of the effect, either we have really no knowledge at all, and our whole system is a system of illusion, which it would be surely impious to assert; or we know, that there is an immediate action, or influence, which amounts to the same, of mind on body. No man in his senses ever doubted, and I am therefore persuaded, that Descartes did not doubt, that volition, an act of the mind, determined the motion of his arms and legs whenever he moved them; though the interest of his hypothesis, which concerns all these men much more than that of truth, obliged him to maintain the contrary, as it obliged him to advance the other paradox, mentioned above, concerning animal automates.

Thus have philosophers in all ages amused mankind with systems of imaginary knowledge,

raised on fastastical ideas and notions, rather than confine themselves within the limits of real knowledge. Instead of fixing our opinions by evident truth, and giving the mind any solid foundation whereon to rest, they have involved us in doubts, and eternised dispute. Like noctambules, they have staggered about, and jostled one another in their dreams. Since the torch of experimental philosophy has been lighted up, these hypothetical reasonings have been exploded, or else confined under certain conditions, in all that relates to corporeal nature. But the abuse has continued in all that relates to spiritual nature: and modern philosophers, like tyrants driven out of one province, have made themselves amends, as it were, by exercising a more arbitrary power in another. The exercise of it in this deserves, however, to be restrained more than in the former. This spiritual nature of our souls, such as it is now conceived to be, such as authority, and among others that of a council, obliges that it should be taught, is an hypothesis assumed on very precarious grounds, and in opposition to those that are the grounds of every other allowable hypothesis. How absurd, therefore, is it in philosophers to assume, on an hypothesis, much more than they would venture to assume on real knowledge! How absurd is it in the rest of mankind, to give credit to them when they do so!

But there is a further objection to this proceeding, drawn from the unavoidable consequences of it, which should render it odious to every

every man, who will not sacrifice the integrity of theism to the artifice of minds fraught with vanity, and stimulated by curiosity. The notion, which these metaphysical reasoners have framed about the human soul or spirit, makes them slide easily and almost necessarily into that familiarity with the Father of Spirits, which has been censured above, into conclusions little less, if at all less, than blasphemous. While philosophers talked of corporeal nature logically, that is, improperly, or on supposed principles of matter and motion, that is, ignorantly, they led themselves and others into errour, but not into such errour. Metaphysicians and divines have this to answer for. Spirit is not certainly a univocal term, though these men use it as such. God is not a system of matter; but he is not therefore a spirit, such as we conceive spirits to be: he is not therefore united to our souls by an inconceivable presence or union, nor even by any gradation of spirit up to him; for between him and the highest created being the distance must be still infinite. Thus we should think and speak of God. But the men we have to do with here have accustomed themselves to think in the same manner, and to speak in the same style, of the divine and human spirit, with no other difference than that of adding infinite to the one, and finite to the other. They conceive them both to be alike immaterial beings, and substances too, as if they or Descartes, who determined that there are but two substances, knew this any better than Spinoza knew that there

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is but one, or than I, who believe there may be several, know how many, or what they are. It is no wonder that such notions of a community, or union of spirits between God and man, should encourage metaphysicians and divines to draw the Deity down to their level, as their several hypotheses require, while they affect to raise themselves up to his, if I may be allowed to use expressions which are no more than proper to signify their attempts. They do in effect spiritualise all the gross conceptions of ignorant and superstitious men, that is, they say much the same things, in a less intelligible manner: and the presence of God, according to Malebranche, and according to Moses, differs in little else. Beside which, if we believe what they affirm, Malebranche had in the Word, or God's eternal reason, an invisible, and the high priest of the Jews, in the tabernacle, a visible Shecinah to interrogate.

After all these reflections, which I have thrown upon paper, as they occurred to my thoughts, and as the frequent interruptions to which I am exposed would give me leave; nay, after all those which they suggest, or which a man of better parts, more knowledge, and more leisure, would be able to make, I doubt not but our plain man would be told, that the hypotheses which have been mentioned deserve much respect, notwithstanding all that has been said against them, since they were intended to support the opinion of the immateriality and immortality of the soul, and, by consequence, of the rewards and punishments

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of a future state, which are the great bonds that attach men to revealed religion. This he would be told, and he would be asked whether he presumes to deny the truth of these doctrines in general, whatever he may think of some particular notions, that philosophers may have entertained concerning them? His answer might be to this effect, that it would be for the interest of these and several other doctrines to let them rest on the authority of revelation; that to make them matter of philosophical speculation is to make them disputable, and that to make them disputable is to unfix them in the minds of men; since, in the natural order of things, revelation may confirm what philosophy teaches; but philosophy can give no confirmation, nor any further authority to what revelation has taught; and since, if it could do so in other cases, it could not do it in these, where questions that have been controverted in all ages among philosophers are concerned. He might add, that, revelation apart, he saw no positive nor determining proof of any of these doctrines; that all the phænomena, from our birth to our death, seem repugnant to the immateriality and immortality of the soul, that he is forced to conclude with Lucretius,

" ——— gigni pariter cum corpore, et unà
" Crescere, sentimus, pariterque senescere
" mentem."

that God had given him reason to distinguish and to judge, and external and internal sense by which to perceive and to reflect; but that this very reason

reason showed him the absurdity of embracing an opinion concerning body and mind, which neither of these senses supports; that how short and imperfect soever the knowledge acquired by observation of the phænomena might be, he was contented with it, because it was knowledge acquired in God's way, that is, in the only way God has appointed to our inquiries about the nature of things corporeal or spiritual: nay further, that if he could suspect himself to be deceived in this way, he would be contented still; he would conclude on this and other occasions, that whether things appear to him as they are absolutely, and such as the Supreme Intelligence knows them to be, or not, they appear to him such as it is fit for his nature that they should appear to him. On this undoubted truth he would rest his mind, instead of perplexing it about indeterminable questions, and of struggling presumptuously and vainly to know things otherwise than his nature and theirs admit that he should know them.

On such principles as these, though he could not affirm, he would not deny, the immortality of the soul. What, indeed, should tempt him to do so? In whatever world, in whatever state he is, he knows that the same God governs. What then has he to fear in one more than in another? Nothing surely, if he thinks as he ought to think of the All-perfect Being. Such God is. Let us not therefore humanise him. Let us not measure his perfections by ours, much less let us ascribe to him, as every system of theology does, under the notion of goodness, what would be partiality,

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nor under the notion of justice, what would be cruelty in man. Let us not presume so much as to ascribe our perfections to him, even according to the highest conceptions we are able to frame of them, though we reject every imperfection conceivable by us, when it is imputed by him. "As "we must not imagine with the anthropomorphites (it is Malebranche, who speaks well in "this place, though very inconsistently with "what he says in others,) that God has the human figure, because it seems to us the most "perfect; we must not think neither that the "mind of God has human thoughts, nor that it "is like to ours, because we know nothing more "perfect than our own minds*." Such theology as this, and surely it is orthodox, makes our plain man to be flattered, not terrified, with any faint appearance of immortality in prospect, like Tully, Seneca, and other philosophers; who saw no more grounds in any thing they knew of the nature of the soul for this expectation, than he sees. He is ready to say of this immortality, what the auditor says in the first Tusculan disputation, "me verò delectat; idque primum ita esse velim, "deinde, etiamsi non sit, mihi tamen persuaderi "velim."

He might, very reasonably, ask the metaphysical divine for what reason he clogs the belief of the soul's immortality with that of it's immateriality, since the former is sufficient to answer all

* Lib. 3, p. 2, c. 9.

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the ends of religion? The doctrine of future rewards and punishments (which is, no doubt, a great restraint on men, and which would be a greater, if it was not so scandalously abused by the ambition and avarice of priests) supposes the immortality of the soul only: and it is much more easy to make men conceive, that it is immortal by the good pleasure of God, though material, than that it is an immaterial spirit, and immortal by the necessity of it's nature, as God is self-existent by the necessity of his. One may wonder that men, who have adopted so many of the whimsical notions which they found in Plato, should not have borrowed a hint that they might have found there, or that they rejected, perhaps, when they found it. The hint I mean is, that of souls mortal by their nature, that is, material, but such as should never die. "Solubiles, sed "dissolvendæ nunquam." "Since you are ge-"nerated, you are mortal, but you shall not die; "for my will is strong enough to repair the de-"fects of your nature," says the Supreme Being to the younger gods, the gods born of gods, in the Timæus; and it is the least absurd thing Plato makes him say or do on that occasion. The neglect of this passage may be imputed to some theological purposes, that seem to be better served by the hypothesis of immaterial souls, than by any other. But the vanity of the human heart, which has been flattered by divines in all ages, was to be flattered on. What served best to this purpose was taken from Plato: and how it was improved we need look no further than

than the Tusculan, just now quoted, to find. There Tully, after a ridiculous panegyrick on the human mind, which, improved by philosophy, he thinks able to discover all things in Heaven and on Earth, all that exists, in it's beginning, progression, and end, runs a very profane parallel between the divine and human mind. If the first " be air or fire, such is the last." If there be a fifth element, that new nature which " Aristotle " first introduced, it must be common to both. " Whatever has sense, intelligence, will, and the " principles of life, is celestial and divine, and " therefore necessary and eternal." This is the nature of man: and " God himself cannot be " conceived any other way," than by analogy to it. That we frame our conceptions of the divine intelligence, as well as we can, by analogy to our own, is true. We have no other way of framing them. But it will not follow, that his nature is analogous to ours, nor that ours is like his, " Mens soluta quædam et libera, segregata ab " omni concretione mortali, omnia sentiens et " movens, ipsaque prædita motu sempiterno." Thus absolutely, however, did the disciples of Plato flatter human nature: and, finding in the Bible, that we are made after the image of God, our divines have interpreted the passage according to these prejudices. They will not say directly, I suppose, that our souls are a portion of the divine essence, but what they say sometimes means this or nothing, and what they say always is but little different from it. Strange vanity!

as they assume themselves to be exposed to eternal damnation, and the rest of mankind to be almost intirely damned, rather than not assume, that their souls are immortal; so this immortality would not have charms sufficient for them, if it was not asserted to be essential to the nature of their souls.

Thus, I believe, our plain man would leave the matter: and thus I leave it too; having said, I hope, enough, to show, that the fondness philosophers have to raise hypotheses that cannot be raised on real ideas, such as have a known foundation in nature, that is, a known conformity with existence, is a principal occasion on which the mind exercises it's artifice in framing such ideas and notions as are merely fantastical. That the mind exercises the same several other ways, and in some less obviously than in this, as it has been hinted above, I know full well. But, enough having been said to show, that human knowledge is imperfect and precarious in it's original, as well as slow and confined in it's progress, and by one great example, which may serve, instar omnium, that they, who pretend to guide the reason of mankind, and to improve human knowledge, do nothing better in matters of the first philosophy, than substitute that which is imaginary in the place of that which is real, or in addition to it, in favour of their prejudices, their passions, and their interests; enough has been said for an Essay concerning the Nature, Extent, and Reality of Human Knowledge.

ESSAY

ESSAY THE SECOND:

CONTAINING

SOME REFLECTIONS

I. On the Folly and Presumption of Philosophers, especially in Matters of the First Philosophy;

II. On the Rise and Progress of their boasted Science;

III. On the Propagation of Errour and Superstition;

IV. And on the Partial Attempts that have been made to reform the Abuses of Human Reason.

ESSAY THE SECOND.

SECTION I.

On the Folly and Presumption of Philosophers, especially in Matters of the First Philosophy.

HE who asserts, that there would be more real knowledge and more true wisdom among mankind, if there was less learning and less philosophy, may offend some men's ears by advancing a paradox; for such, at least, they will call it. But men who inquire without prejudice, and who dare to doubt, will soon discover, that this seeming paradox is a most evident truth. They will find it such in almost every part of human science, and above all others in that which is called metaphysical and theological. The vanity of the vainest men alive, of some who call themselves scholars and philosophers, will be hurt; but they who seek truth without any other regard, and who prefer therefore very wisely even ignorance to errour, will rejoice at every such discovery.

There was a time when navigators bent themselves obstinately to find a passage by the North-East or the North-West to Cathay. Neither frequent losses nor constant disappointment could divert them from these enterprises, as long as the

fashionable folly prevailed. The passage was not found; the fashion wore out, and the folly ceased. The bounds of navigation were set; and sufficient warning was both given and taken against any further attempts in those dark and frozen regions. Many such there are in the intellectual world: and many such attempts have been made there with no better success. But the consequence has not been the same. Neither examples nor experience have had their effect on philosophers, more fool-hardy than mariners: and where the former wandered to no purpose three thousand years ago, they wander to no purpose, at least to no good purpose, still.

" Il faut pousser à une porte pour sçavoir " qu'elle nous est close," says Charron, somewhere in his Book of Wisdom. He says right, " pour sçavoir qu'elle nous est close." But when we know, or may know very certainly, by our own experience, and by that of all the strong men in philosophy, ancients and moderns, that a door is shut which no human force can open, they who continue to sweat and toil in shoving at it are most ridiculously employed. They who affect to guess at the objects they cannot see, and to talk as if the door stood wide open while they peep through the keyhole, are employed still worse. The most ancient philosophers may be excused, in great measure, for attempting to open every door of science; though they cannot be so for imposing on mankind discoveries they never made. But they who followed these, in the course of philoso-

phical generations, are inexcusable on the first head as well as the last; since what was curiosity in the others became presumption in them: and they scarce made amends, by the good they did in advancing some real knowledge, for the hurt they did in entailing so much that is quite fantastical on posterity.

Tully confesses very frankly, that nothing is so absurd which some philosopher or other has not said: and his own works would furnish sufficient proofs of the assertion, under the Epicurean, the Stoical, and the Academical characters particularly, if they were wanted. But this confession does not go far enough: and we may employ upon this occasion against philosophers the objection made against the Jesuits by some of their enemies. The absurdities of philosophers are not to be ascribed to the particular men alone who broached them in every philosophical age, but to their order and institution, if I may say so; the principles and spirit of which lead, by necessary consequences, to such absurdities. The first founders of philosophy laid these principles, and inspired this spirit in days of ignorance and superstition. Their followers have refined upon them, confirmed them, and added to them. Time and authority have established them all: the oldest and the grossest most. Words that have really no meaning are thought to have one, and are used accordingly. Ideas, that are really incomplete and inadequate, are deemed complete and adequate. Ideas, that are obscure and confused,

are deemed clear and distinct. In a word, time and authority have so well established metaphysical and theological absurdities, that they pass for the first principles of science, like certain necessary and self-evident truths, which are really such. Men, who would have been giants in the human sphere, have dwindled into pigmies by going out of it. Instead of heaping mountains on mountains of knowledge, to scale the sky, they heap mole hills on mole hills, with great airs of importance, and boast ridiculously, not only of their design, but of their success. They appear to me like sylphs, if you and Ariel will give me leave to make the comparison, so proud of not being gnomes, that they fancy themselves archangels. "Humana ad deos transferunt, divina "mallem ad nos," is an expression used by Tully, and extremely applicable to the philosophers of whom we are speaking. They do most presumptuously the first, and they pretend, with equal folly and effrontery, to do the last. They ascribe to the Supreme Being the manner of knowing, the ideas, and even the very affections and passions of his creatures. They presume to enter into his councils, and to account for the whole divine œconomy, as confidently as they would for any of their own paltry affairs. This they call theology. They build intellectual and material worlds on the hypothetical suggestions of imagination. This they call philosophy, metaphysical and physical.

By such means, and by such men, truth and

errour have been intimately blended together, from the first essays of philosophical inquiry: and various systems of natural and supernatural theology have prevailed in different ages. Had any one of them been wholly founded in real knowledge, and confined to it, as every one of them pretended to be, the certainty and the importance of such a system would have preserved it among the rational part of mankind. Truth, pure and unmixed, would have given stability. But errour has kept them all in a continual flux: and to the shame of the human head and heart, the most rational, or the most reasoning part of mankind, has maintained this flux, by adopting some errours, by inventing others, and by cultivating both.

If there is no subject, and I think there is none, upon which the opinions of men have varied so extravagantly, and have stood in such manifest contradiction to one another, as they have on that of the First Philosophy, the reason is, that men have not aimed so much at unattainable knowledge, nor pretended so much to it, on any other subject. Folly and knavery have prevailed most where they should be tolerated least: and presumption has been exercised most where diffidence and caution are on many accounts the most necessary.

" Quale per incertam lunam sub luce malignâ
" Est iter in silvis."

Such is our journey in the acquisition of knowledge, whenever we attempt to travel far. We grope along in those paths which experience, and the application of our minds, open to us. We discern, according to our manner of perception, a few objects that lie in our way, and we guess at a few more. But we cannot even guess, with as much probability as is necessary to justify us in guessing, at our whole system, nor explain the phænomena of it. How much less ought we to think ourselves capable of knowing the divine system! We have a very superficial acquaintance with man. Do we hope to become better acquainted with God? One would imagine, that metaphysical divines did really entertain this hope. They may entertain it, as well as the huffing opinions, to use a phrase of Mr. Locke, which they entertain concerning the human mind or soul. They assume it to be near akin to the divine, something derived immediately from God, and capable of being united to him. An intellectual mirror it is, that reflects from the phænomena of nature alone, and therefore, indirectly, some very few notices of the Supreme Being, beyond the demonstrative knowledge that we have of his existence. But these men, when they lower their pretensions, and would appear modest, assume it to be not a mirror that reflects such notices, but a spirit that is capable of receiving them, and that receives them directly from the Divine Intelligence. They tell us, with great metaphysical

pomp

pomp of words, that reason, the supreme eternal reason, is the sun of their intellectual world, in the light of which they see intelligible objects, just as sensible objects are seen in that of the material sun. On such bold presumptions they proceed, and whither may they not, whither have they not been carried by them? The farther they go, the more their imaginary light fails them. But they cease not to flatter themselves: and while they expect at every moment, as it were, the dawn of a new day, they fall into the shades of night.

---- " Ubi cœlum condidit umbrâ
" Jupiter, et rebus nox abstulit atra colorem."

Now since metaphysical divines have wandered thus so many thousand years in imaginary light and real darkness, they are not surely the guides we should choose to follow. That a degree of knowledge to which I cannot attain is therefore unattainable by them, it would be impertinent to conclude. But I may conclude, reasonably and modestly, that a kind of knowledge, whose objects lie above the reach of humanity, cannot be attained by human creatures, unless they are assisted by supernatural powers, which is a supposition out of the present case. I could not have discovered, as Newton did, that universal law of corporeal nature which he has demonstrated. But farther than that he could go, no more than I, nor discover that action of the first cause by which this law was imposed on all bodies, and is maintained in them. It is the kind, not the degree

gree of knowledge that is concerned, and to be compared. Let us return, therefore, out of this scene of illusion into that of human knowledge; nor flutter, as Hobbes expresses himself, like birds at the window, while we remain enclosed. We may be the better contented to confine our inquiries to the limits God has prescribed to them, since we may find within those limits abundant matter of real use and ornament to employ the studious labours of mankind. Experimental knowledge of body and mind is the fund our reason should cultivate: and the first is a fund that philosophers will never exhaust. In this part, let deficiencies be noted. There are, there can be no excesses: and as to the excesses that have been and are to be noted in the other, they are excesses of assuming and reasoning, not of experiment and observation. The phænomena of the human mind are few, and on those few a multitude of hypotheses has been raised, concerning mind in general, and soul and spirit. So that in this part, the improvement of real knowledge must be made by contraction, and not by amplification. I will presume to say, that if our Bacon had thought and writ as freely on this as he did on many other parts of science, his famous work, which has contributed so much, would have contributed more, to the advancement of real knowledge, and would have deserved it's title better. Men might have learned to consider body more, instead of doubting whether it exists; and to consider their own minds more, from which alone they

they can acquire any ideas at all of mind; instead of dreaming, like Malebranche, that they interrogate the divine Logos.

What right the first observers of nature and instructors of mankind had to the title of sages we cannot say. It was due, perhaps, more to the ignorance of the scholars, than to the knowledge of the masters. But this we may venture to affirm, that their right to that appellation could not be worse founded than the right of all their successors to be called lovers of wisdom. There is an anecdote related by Tully, in his fifth Tusculan, and mentioned, I think, by Diogenes Laertius, which is much to our present purpose: or at least the tale is pretty enough to deserve to be told. The prince of the Phliasians having heard and admired the Samian, asked him, what his profession was. He answered, that he was a philosopher, and he explained himself thus: He said, that the life of man seemed to him to resemble the great assembly or fair of Greece, that was held at Olympia, where some resorted to acquire honour by exercising themselves in the public games, and others wealth by traffic; while another sort of men came for a much better reason, to see and to observe whatever passed. Thus, he said, some men come into the world to seek glory, and some wealth; while a few, despising both, observe and study nature: and these are lovers of wisdom. We might be induced by this tale to think, that Pythagoras confined himself within the bounds of real knowledge, if we did not know, by a multi-

tude

tude of other anecdotes, and by the scraps of his doctrine that have come down to us, how far he rambled out of them. He had been bred in schools where the distinction between human and divine knowledge and wisdom, to one of which we may attain, but not to the other, was so little made, that by aiming at the last, they missed, in many respects, even the former. To observe the constitution and order of things, in the physical and moral systems to which we belong, to form general ideas, notions, axioms, and rules on these particulars, and to apply them back again to human action and human use, constitutes knowledge: and the result of the whole is wisdom, human knowledge, and human wisdom. But there are men, and there were such in the days of Pythagoras, who talk of wisdom as if it was not the the result of any procedure of this kind, but a superior principle antecedent to it, independent of human knowledge, and the influences whereof descend on the human mind from above, as Christian theology teaches us that grace and faith are bestowed on us.

According to such philosophers as these, men of great authority in our learned world, we must date the progress of knowledge and wisdom from Adam, who was the wisest of men, if it be no blunder to say so, before the fall, and the first and greatest philosopher after it. I will not mispend any time in collecting the puerilities and profanations that have fallen from the pens of rabbins and ancient and modern doctors of the Christian church.

church. It will be enough, and in truth more than the subject deserves, to take notice, that if we give credit to these writers, we must believe, that wisdom was infused into the mind of Adam by God, and that he came out of the hands of his Creator with all the perfections of which his nature was susceptible: and of what perfections was not that nature susceptible, while he enjoyed the vision of God, and while the Supreme Wisdom, that is God himself, "for the Word is God," was pleased to converse with him, and was delighted in his company *? He had not only innate wisdom, but innate language too; for Adam and Eve discoursed together in Hebrew as soon as they were created. Even after the fall, Adam preserved all the knowledge and wisdom whereof he was in possession, though more obscurely than before; because he had no longer the same immediate and intimate communication with the Supreme Intelligence. It should seem, too, that he transmitted some faint glimmerings of these original illuminations to all his posterity. Plato imagined, after more ancient philosophers, that every man is born with a certain reminiscence, and that when we seem to be taught, we are only put in mind of what we knew in a former state. Now who can tell how high this reminiscence began, and through how many former states it may have been continued? Several Christian divines

* —— ludens in orbe terrarum; & deliciæ meæ, esse cum filiis hominum. Prov. c. 8, v. 31.

have

have taught, that, all men having been contained in the first man, some of his original perfection has descended to them, as well as the taint of his original sin: and we may conceive one, no doubt, as easily as the other.

But however all this may have been, and whether Adam preserved, after the fall, his whole stock of knowledge and wisdom, or whether he renewed it by experience and meditation in the course of a long life, the progress of knowledge and wisdom is deduced by the same writers from him to Seth, to Enoch, to Noah, to the patriarchs, to Moses, to Solomon, to the elders of Israel, to the priests of the family of Aaron, to the colleges of the prophets, to those sanctified orders, the Rechabites and the Essenians, and in short to all the schools of the chosen people, both before and after the captivity. Among this people, we are told most dogmatically, that the whole treasure of knowledge and wisdom, as well as of true religion, was deposited by God, that it was preserved there, and that some of these riches were distributed from thence at different periods of time to the rest of mankind: so that the people of the whole Earth lighted up their candles at the lamp of the tabernacle. Joseph is sometimes the ancient Hermes, Moses the younger. Nay, Joseph is sometimes the fifth Mercury, mentioned in several traditions, who gave laws to the Egyptians, and taught them letters: and Moses was the fourth, whom they thought it criminal to name on account of the plagues they had endured at the famous

famous Exode. By these men, the light of philosophy was spread in Egypt. Daniel, Zorobabel, and others of the captive Jews, spread it in Chaldæa: and Solomon had spread it, long before, among his neighbours the Phœnicians, who left some sparks of it in all the countries to which these famous navigators sailed.

This account of the rise and progress of philosophy, with a multitude of other circumstances, is so inconsistent and so unauthorised, or rather so grossly fabulous, that they who give credit to it must first renounce all the conditions of historical probability. Josephus, Eusebius, Clement of Alexandria, and others, both Jews and Christians, laid the foundations of the whole legend, and dressed up different parts of it. Modern scholars, like Bochart, Huet, Stillingfleet, and many more, have taken a great deal of ridiculous pains to support it. I shall not enter at this time into any particulars concerning the proofs they bring. I will only say, that, by the same methods, it will not be difficult to make antiquity depose just as we please. If we affirm, as it is done in the present case, without even any seeming authority; if we connect at other times broken, and supply imperfect passages by guess: and if we paraphrase such as are obscure, till we make them say what there is no reason but the reason of our scheme to believe they were intended to say; in short, and to mention no more of these learned artifices, if we adopt such anecdotes as suit our purpose,

and

and reject such as are not favourable to it, though derived from the same or equivalent authority, no historical paradox will want sufficient colour to make it pass for truth, at least among those who have, as the writers above-mentioned had, some favourite purpose to serve by it.

That arts and sciences travelled from the East to the West, from Chaldæa to Egypt, and from Egypt to Greece, has been a received opinion;

"Tradidit Ægyptis Babylon, Ægyptus Achivis."

This opinion agrees so well with our Scripture account of the repeopling the world after the deluge, and of the antiquity of nations, that it ought to be retained, perhaps, for that very reason. Two writers, of more fame than good authority, but who are principally depended upon by modern antiquarians, seem to have thought so. Josephus relates, that Abraham was enriched by the immense presents the Egyptians made him for instructing them in the sciences that he brought from Chaldæa. Eusebius assures us, from the same Josephus, that the Egyptians were ignorant of astrology and even of arithmetic; and from Eupolemus, that Abraham conversed, while he was in their country, with the priests of Heliopolis. But, notwithstanding all the authorities on which this received opinion is founded, a man of ingenuity and much reading would not find it hard to establish another, by a new choice of passages, and by a new disposition of them; for the learned ring different changes on the same set of bells.

bells. He might show us, perhaps, that arts and sciences came from the West, in a more remote age than any the Greeks had knowledge of; that they were introduced and spread by the Atlantic people, who overrun Africa and Europe, and of whom Solon had never heard till the Egyptian priests related these wonders to him; or he might bring them, perhaps, from the kingdom of Uranus, that kingdom to which Atlas, coeval with Saturn, and his brother, according to Diodorus Siculus, gave his name; if in truth the people of that kingdom were different from the others who bore the same name; which point of criticism it might be more difficult than important to settle, since in all cases arts and sciences would still have been brought from the West to the East. After this, it would be easy to transport them from Ethiopia, the African Ethiopia, or Egypt, to more eastern nations, to the Phœnicians, the Assyrians, the Persians, the Indians, and the Chinese.

SECT. II.

On the Rise and Progress of the boasted Science of Philosophers.

But to dwell no longer on these serious trifles, let us consider, whether the rise and progress of philosophy, especially of the first, may not be accounted for with a probability that is founded on the general tenour of tradition, and on the ana-

logy with what we know of nations that have grown up from barbarity to civility, and from ignorance to knowledge.

I think then, on both these foundations, that philosophy neither had, nor could have, in the ordinary course of things, a stated beginning at any point of time, nor in any particular place. It began, at different periods, in different places, and was subject to all the revolutions that attend the human state. It was the growth of some countries, it was propagated into others. It flourished long in some countries, it languished, and was soon at an end in others. It thrived more or less, it lived and died according to the characters of people, and the fortune of governments. Wherever it began, the beginnings of it were inconsiderable; for the trees which compose the grove of knowledge shoot up from the smallest seeds. Nor was this all. The imperfections of our nature, which have manifested themselves in the whole progress of philosophy, manifested themselves, no doubt, even more grossly at the rise of it, though ignorance concealed them at that time, as knowledge has disguised them since. Ignorance preceded knowledge. Errour was coeval, and grew up with it. Errour flourishes in shades; and before men could get out of those which ignorance spread, errour had outgrown and overshadowed knowledge. Superstition accompanied them: and though errour was the principal nurse, even knowledge contributed to rear this child of ignorance and fear.

It

It is agreeable to ancient traditions, and modern relations, to believe, that wild uncivilised people, though reduced into societies subject to some regulations of government, and directed by some general rules, which constant experience forces them to observe, have few means and little leisure to improve even in that knowledge, the foundations of which are already laid by some urgent necessity among them, and which would render their state, if it was improved, much more comfortable. Their whole time is employed, the whole attention of their minds is bent, to provide from day to day, and from season to season, for their sustenance: and the exercise of reason appears as little in them as in the beasts they sometimes hunt, and by whom they are sometimes hunted. Arts lie uninvented or unimproved, and science they have not. But the first openings to science, and the first motive to philosophical inquiries, they have even in the state I describe: and this motive shows itself in that curiosity to know the causes of the phænomena, which is so natural to the human mind. The most common excite it. Those that are extraordinary excite it more, and those from which they receive much benefit or much hurt excite it most of all. Another principle, as natural to the human mind, but not very apt to direct our inquiries right, is that whereby we make ourselves the measure, as well as the final cause of all things. It is this that has represented the unknown causes of the ordinary as well as extraordinary, of the beneficial

as well as hurtful phænomena of nature to the minds of such savages and demisavages as we describe under the images of animal beings, a little different from man, but analogous to him, and endued only with greater power and greater intelligence. These they placed above or below, according to the different scenes of action to which imagination assigned them; like the captain above and the captain below, the two divinities of the Hottentots. Thus the Heaven, the earth, the sea, and the air were soon peopled with divinities, that directed all their motions, and directed them all relatively to man. Unable to discover the order of second causes, to trace those that are remote from those that lie nearest to our observation, and those that are more general from those that are less so, which would have led them at last to the first efficient cause of all things, they took a shorter and easier method of accounting for appearances, by ascribing every one to some particular efficient cause. Thus they made gods as many as they wanted; and having once made them, it became equally unnecessary to look after intermediate, and impious to suppose any superior cause. It thundered: Jupiter was angry. It lightened: he darted one of his fiery bolts at some devoted head. What would curiosity desire more to know *?

I might

* If ignorance and fear were the two first sources from which polytheism and idolatry arose, flattery was in process of time another; or that which was gratitude originally degenerated

I might illustrate what has been said by numerous examples, if I affected, what I esteem very little,

nerated into flattery. Men who had been honoured for the good they did during their lives[a], or admired for their great actions, were adored after their deaths[b]. This custom was extended so far, that in some countries[c], not only public benefactors, and heroes, and kings were deified, but every private man worshipped those to whom he had been particularly obliged[d]. Thus it was, that the Egyptians came to have whole dynasties of gods and of demigods[e]. The fame of Osiris, whenever he lived, had been great: and the veneration of his subjects for him was such, that they gave his name to their gods, or ascribed the names of their gods to him[f]. Some have imagined, and among them Sir J. Marsham, if I remember right, that his whole family and his whole court had their share of divine honours. That, as his sister, who was his wife too, followed him to Heaven, under the name of Isis, so the president of his council became the god of arts and eloquence, under the name of Mercury: and the general of his troops was the patron of magnanimity and

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[a] Cic. de Nat. Deor. l. 2.

[b] Hic est vetustissimus referendi bene merentibus gratiam mos, ut tales numinibus ascribant. Plin. l. 2.

[c] Æthiopia. See Strab. l. 17.

[d] Quamobrem major cœlitum populus etiam quam hominum intelligi potest, cum singuli quoque ex semetipsis totidem deos faciant, Junones, Geniosque adoptando sibi. Plin. ubi supra.

[e] Suscepit autem vita hominum consuetudoque communis, ut beneficiis excellentes viros in cœlum famâ ac voluntate tollerent. Hinc Hercules, hinc Castor et Pollux, &c. Cic. de Nat. Deor. l. 2.

[f] Hac arte Pollux, & vagus Hercules
Innixus arces attigit igneas. Hor.

little, particular and critical knowledge of the anecdotes of antiquity. It is enough for me to have

military virtue, under that of Hercules: nay, that his brother and his sons were no more forgot by the priest, than Busiris and Antæus, the governors of two of his provinces, have been by the poets. Sesostris furnished the same matter to fables, many generations afterward: and learned men think that several of those in Homer may be traced up to this famous expedition. These deifications gave occasion to the hymns that were made and sung, not only as parts of divine worship, but as necessary means to preserve the memory of great events. Tully says somewhere, that the funeral orations in use at Rome had corrupted history; because historians, in the dearth of materials, had taken such as they found in those rhetorical panegyrics. How much more must such hymns have corrupted both history and religion! The simplicity of true theism could never subsist in the figures of poetry. Affected inspiration passed for real, hyperboles were understood literally, and the machinery of an ode was taken for matter of fact.

Men grew fonder of polytheism by another custom that prevailed. Every sect framed a new list of gods, or gave new names to ancient divinities: and although in some places temples were opened to the whole rabble of the sky, yet in others the gods seemed to be reduced to a smaller number, and every nation was fond to have it believed, that the deities they worshipped belonged in a peculiar manner to their country and to them. The birth of Bacchus, for instance, had been claimed by several nations of Asia and Africa, when Orpheus applied to the son of Semele the fables he had learned in Egypt concerning another Bacchus, and instituted, in honour of this new divinity, the orgia and religious ceremonies he had seen practised in honour of others more ancient, of the same name and profession, if I may use the term. It would be impossible to enumerate, not only all the different gods, but even all those that were worshipped under the same appellation; for Varro, I think, reckoned at least three hundred Jupiters.

But

have read and considered them so far, as to see some general truths that result from them. I proceed

But before I leave this head, I will mention very shortly one or two ways more, by which these superstitions received increase, since they occur readily to my mind. Mistake and involuntary errour was one, involuntary in the generality, though often imposed, sometimes helped, and always connived at, by the pious frauds of the priesthood. The legend of Dodona related, that two black doves took their flight from the Egyptian Thebes, one into Lybia, the other into Greece; that the first ordered the temple of Jupiter Hammon to be founded, and that the latter, perching on a tree at Dodona, and speaking in the human voice, declared it to be in the fates, that another oracle of Jupiter should be established there. The fact was attested by all that belonged to the temple, and the miracle passed currently. But the priests of the Theban Jupiter, who had no interest in this particular superstition, and with whom Herodotus conversed when he was in Egypt, explained the blunder and the fraud to him. Some Phœnician rovers, it seems, had carried off two priestesses, and sold one into Lybia, and the other into Greece, where they set up oracles on the model of that which was in their own country. Bochart has shown how affinity of sounds, which gave occasion to the Greek poets to call the priests Doves, might give occasion to this fable: and Sir J. Marsham cites a passage in Homer, where doves are said to carry ambrosia to Jupiter. Let me say, by the way, that Bochart might have learned from hence, how precarious a foundation for conjecture similitude of sound is, on which, however, many of his conjectures rest principally.

That I may compare this ancient with a modern instance of impudent fraud and foolish credulity, let me mention, among many, one that prevails at this time even in France. It is believed then in that country, by devout persons, that some holy man had formerly a revelation in a vision, or a dream, directing a monastery to be built and founded in a

proceed, therefore, in the same manner to observe, that many ancient traditions might induce one to

particular field, which was shown to him. The good man published this revelation: a bigot age believed him: the monastery was founded, and a new order of lazy drones was added to the church. Their first and all their other monasteries were richly endowed: and they continue to this day under a name that marks their supposed divine institution, the name of Premontrè.

If such gross lies could be imposed, if plain matters of fact could be thus perverted, to foment superstition, what errours must have arisen to have the same effect from the use of hieroglyphics, symbols, and allegories, wherein physical and moral philosophy were delivered down to posterity? If naked truth, passing through many hands, came to be disguised, what must have happened to truth, wearing a mask at her first appearance? The hieroglyphic and the symbol remained, and the fable continued in tradition, when the signification of the one, and the moral of the other, were forgot. Books, which treat of ancient mythology, furnish many instances of this kind. I will mention two out of Diodorus Siculus, as examples of another way, whereby superstitious opinions and practices increased among the heathen. Pallas was a virgin, born out of the head of Jupiter. She was a goddess, famous in many respects; and we see of what consequence her statue was in the Trojan war [a]. Now the ancient naturalists meaned to express, by this daughter of Jupiter, nothing more than the air, uncorrupted, and holding the sublimer place among the elements. Thus again, as the Romans carried the eagle, so the Egyptians carried the images of divers beasts in their ensigns [b]. These images, which were preserved only as monuments of their triumphs, came in time to be adored as authors of their victories. The dog, which Anubis, and the wolf, which Macedon, wore on their shields or on their helmets,

[a] Diod. Sic. l. 1. [b] Ib. l. 2.

after

to think, that the unity of God was the original belief of mankind, and that polytheism and idolatry were the corruptions of the orthodox faith. Cudworth seemed to me to have established this opinion on as good foundation as any opinions of this sort can rest, and I own that I once very much inclined to it. But when it is considered more closely, and without prepossession, I apprehend that it can be supported neither by sacred nor by profane authority.

Not by sacred; because the Mosaic account is plainly inconsistent with itself, as it stands in the books we have under the name of Moses. Not by profane; because those anecdotes are quite unfavourable to this opinion, and because every probable reason that can be drawn from the constitution of human nature, and from the ordinary process of the human mind, stands in direct contradiction to it.

Methusalem, it is said, saw both Adam and Noah, to both of whom God revealed himself in his unity. Shem, the son of Noah, lived even to the days of Abraham. Need I stay to show how impossible it is for any man in his senses to believe, that a tradition, derived from God himself, through so few generations, was lost among the greatest part of mankind, or that polytheism and

after having been long honoured as emblems of these demigods, came to be gods themselves. From some such originals might proceed many other monstrous objects of adoration,'

——— qualia demens
—— Ægyptus portenta colit——Juv.

idolatry

idolatry were established on the ruins of it in the days of Serug, before those of Abraham, and so soon after the deluge? I should think it impossible even for the Jews themselves, who swallow so many fables and so many anachronisms. Since the unity of God was not universally taught in those early days, it was not so revealed, nor preserved in the manner assumed.

If the inconsistency of this account makes us reject it, we shall find less reason to believe, on the authority of profane traditions, that the unity of God was the primitive faith of mankind. Revelations to the Father and to the Restorer of the whole human race might have established this faith universally: but without revelation it could not be that even of any one people, till observation and meditation, till a full and vigorous exercise of reason made it such. By considering the phænomena separately, men could not arrive at a knowledge of the one Supreme Being: and such men, as we speak of, were not capable of taking an intire view of the harmony of the whole.

Writers are apt to talk of general consent, as if it proved in all cases, that opinions so consented to have a real conformity, and bear a real proportion, to the universal reason of mankind. Thus, in Tully, there are some attempts to prove the truths of polytheism. Thus a modern philosopher and divine * attempts to prove, that the belief of invisible spirits, employed in

* Thomassin. Mét. d'Etudier &c. la Philos.

directing

directing the affairs of this visible world, is founded in " natural instinct and the evidence of " reason." It would be easy to show, in a multitude of instances, that if this postulatum be admitted, things manifestly false must pass often for true, and things demonstrated true, for false. Even the existence of a first intelligent Cause, the very unity of God, of which we are speaking, must be owned to want this pretended criterion of truth. But if universal consent be not necessary to establish this demonstrated truth, how much less necessary is it, that this should have been the primitive belief of mankind ! Polytheism and idolatry are repugnant to right reason, that is to the conclusions that reason draws from sufficient information, and from the combinations and comparisons of real, not fantastick ideas and notions. But polytheism and idolatry have so close a connection with the few superficial and ill verified ideas and notions of rude ignorant men, and with the affections of their minds, that one of them could not fail to be their first religious principle, nor the other their first religious practice.

There is so little profane authority for asserting the contrary, that if the passages produced to prove it were more direct, and more numerous and uniform than they are, they would not prove it to any one, who gives as little credit to our very best systems of ancient chronology as they deserve. Suppose it clearly proved by some of these passages, in any one instance, that the unity of

of God was the primitive belief, the term primitive will be equivocal, and the proof precarious. For how shall we be assured, that we see clearly in the midst of chronological darkness, which is always thickest the further we go back, that this orthodox faith was not preceded among the same people by polytheism and idolatry, as we shall certainly find, that it was succeeded by them? The whole world appears, as soon as we come into historical light, overrun with them. The vulgar embrace them easily, even after the true doctrine of a Divine Unity has been taught and received, as we may learn from the example of the Israelites: and superstitions grow apace and spread wide, even in those countries where Christianity has been established, and is daily taught; as we may learn from the examples of the Roman churches, to say nothing of the reformed, who are less liable to the objection. But still it remains true, that the belief of one Supreme Being may be established on the ruins of polytheism and idolatry. In fact it hath been so, in historical ages. Why should it not have been so in that dark age, which preceded even the fabulous age, according to Varro's distribution of them? In the Theban dynasty, the Supreme Being was piously adored under the name of Kneph, and the people of it were so far from any idolatrous worship, that they refused, on this account, as rigid Jews or Christians might have done, to contribute to a tax raised in Egypt, and applied to repair the temples, the images or pictures, and other instruments

ments of idolatry. Now the Theban was the most ancient dynasty of Egypt: and the Egyptians were the most ancient people of the world: the first men, therefore, were unitarians, not polytheists. But how can this conclusion stand, when the premises neither have been, nor can be proved; when there may have been dynasties more ancient than this, or various revolutions of religion in this very dynasty; and when I have much more reason to believe, on the reason of the thing, and on a general analogy to what has happened in other countries, that the first men were polytheists, than any scholar has, on the precarious authority of a broken tradition or two, to pronounce them orthodox on this article of their faith? In short, there is, I think, no sufficient grounds on which to believe, that natural theology was taught in it's purity first, and corrupted afterward; whereas reason and observation both make it probable, that it has fared with the First Philosophy as with every other part of science, that is, much errour has been mingled sometimes with a little knowledge, and especially in the beginnings of men's inquiries into nature; and that at other times in the progress of these inquiries, where any progress has been made, more or less knowledge has been acquired with a less proportion of errour. Conscious of human weakness and dependency, men have acknowledged, in the infancy of philosophy, and even before the birth of it, power and intelligence superior to their own, such as made the world,

or such, at least, as governs it. This was knowledge. But errour grew up with it. They adored the visible objects that struck their senses, or at best the invisible beings that they assumed to reside in them. The rational, the orthodox belief, the first true principle of all theology, was not established, nor could be so, till the manhood of philosophy.

The progress of this manhood was every where slow, and in some countries none appears to have been ever made. On the contrary, men continued from age to age in the same state, which may be properly called a state of natural errour and superstition. Such nations, like changelings or naturals, may be said to have been children to their death. But in others this progress was made, and favourable combinations of circumstances helped to quicken it, in some more, in some less: but in all much more to the improvement of useful arts, and of other sciences, particularly of government, than to the investigation of truths concerning the First Philosophy. We read, with a just admiration, the accounts that are come down to us, short and imperfect as they are, of the wisdom and policy of ancient nations, of the eastern empires, and particularly in Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus, of the Egyptian government. All the arts and sciences were carried far among them, several much further than we are able to imitate; and if we judge of their improvements in other sciences, as we may fairly do, by those which they made in astronomy, we shall find

find reason to be of opinion, that these sunk instead of rising in the hands of the Greeks, notwithstanding their boasts, and those of Plato particularly, that they improved all they learned; as we see that the knowledge of the true solar system was lost soon after the days of Pythagoras, and made way for the false one of Ptolemy. But when we consider the state of natural theology among the same nations, and at the same time, we admire no longer; we remain astonished, that men, who excelled in every other branch of knowledge, should embrace so many absurd errours in this, and deduce from their philosophy a system of religion, that rendered them a proverb, even among polytheists and idolaters. To give a full account of this, would be to give a history of the progress of the First Philosophy. I shall touch the principal heads as shortly as I can; and indeed the greatest scholars, when they pretend to do much more, to enter into a detail of particulars, and to treat this subject minutely, involve themselves and their readers in webs of hypotheses, one generally as improbable as another, and none of them of any real use. They show much learning, as it is called, and often much subtilty, and this is all they show, that deserves any commendation, if even this deserves it. I refer you, therefore, to them, if you are desirous to see more particulars than you will find here, concerning the rise and early progress of Pagan theology and worship.

Among people immersed in ignorance and superstition, there arose in ancient days, as there have

have done since, some men of more genius than the common herd, and that were placed in situations and circumstances, which gave them, perhaps, opportunities of receiving instruction from others; or at least better means of observing nature themselves; and more leisure for the investigation of truth, and for the improvement of knowledge. These men were the first missionaries, and I suppose the best, that have been seen in the world. They assembled little families, clans, or hordes, into larger and more civilised communities: they invented many useful arts of life: they established order and good government, and they taught men the great lesson of promoting the happiness of individuals, by promoting that of the public, and of preserving liberty, by subjection to law. These legislators, however, had been bred in the superstitious opinions and practices of their families and countries, and, for that reason, one may incline to think, that they preserved a tang of this superstition in their legislative capacity; since it is much more rare to see men shake off intirely long habits of errour, than to see them rise out of mere ignorance to certain degrees of knowledge. On this supposition, it would be obvious to account for the superstitious opinions and practices which they propagated, and rendered venerable in all the governments they established. But a reflection presents itself immediately, which lets us into a secret and perhaps a truer motive, that they had to hold this conduct. They might be neither bigots to old superstitions, nor

to

to those that they superinduced themselves. They could not believe, that they had a correspondence, which they knew they had not, with gods or dæmons, even if they believed the existence of such imaginary beings, and yet they all pretended to this great prerogative. The Egyptian wisdom, their religious and civil institutions, were taught by Mercury: and their first legislators and philosophers assumed the name, or had it given them on this account. Zoroaster and Zamolxis, one among the Bactrians, and the other among the Scythians, had revelations from Vesta. Minos had them from Jupiter himself, and Charondas from Saturn. Numa conversed familiarly with Ægeria, and Pythagoras with Minerva. I need mention no more, for I will not offend by adding Moses to this catalogue.

Now since these men imposed revelations they knew to be false, we may conclude, they were not much in earnest about several of the doctrines they taught, and of the institutions they made; not even about a doctrine which most, and, I believe, all of them, were extremely solicitous to inculcate, I mean, the doctrine of future rewards and punishments. They endeavoured to profit of the general disposition, to apprehend superior powers, in some of whom superstition had accustomed men to imagine a severity of justice, and even an inclination to afflict and torment; and they knew enough of the human heart, to know that men would be flattered with immortality in any shape, and though the consequence of it

the passions sudden and violent. Reason, therefore, might suggest the art, that served to turn the passions on her side.

Though I think, that they who instituted religions in the Pagan world were not convinced of the truth of their own doctrines, and that their sole view was to add, by this political expedient, divine to human authority, and the sanction of revelation to the dictates of right reason, yet I am persuaded, that many of them believed the existence of one Supreme Being, the fountain of all existence, as I said just now. They believed farther, the anecdotes of antiquity make it plain that they did, the existence of many inferior beings; generated, not ungenerated, gods and dæmons. They erected, at it were, a divine monarchy on the ruins of a divine aristocracy; and, in this respect, as well as many others, they refined, while they improved in knowledge, out of the absurdities of original superstition, into one that was a little less absurd, and that came nearer the truth, or disguised errour under more plausible appearances. But all these refinements, at least, as soon as the distinction of a public and a secret doctrine was made, whenever that was made, became parts of their hidden doctrine, which was communicated to the initiated alone. Their outward doctrine differed not from that of the vulgar, it was the same: or rather the superstition they found established by custom and habit, and that which they superinduced by institution

stitution, composed one monstrous system of ridiculous polytheism and nauseous idolatry. I imagine, that the First Philosophy, of which I am to speak principally in this Essay, took it's rise among the sons of men, and was sometimes purged and improved, as every other part of philosophy was, in certain places, and rendered more abominable in others.

I do not intend to make the apology of those, who destroyed the true principles of natural theology, by adopting old, and inventing new superstitions, in order to enforce submission to government, and the practice of morality. I say only, the first reformers of mankind are not without excuse on this head. Great authorities may be cited, ancient and modern, Pagan and Christian; some for imposing things untrue, some for concealing things true, and some for doing both, in matters of religion. But a much better excuse, and such a one as divines particularly will have no good grace in rejecting, may be urged in their favour: and if nothing can justify, this will at least alleviate their guilt.

This was their case: they found mankind immersed in superstition, and accustomed to licentiousness. To cure them of the latter, they made their profit of the former. They reduced curious superstitions, that were taken up by chance, as every man's imagination suggested them to him, and without design, into systems; and they directed these systems, in doctrine and practice, to the purpose of reforming the manners of the half

savage people whom they civilised, and to the improvement of social life, under the influence of law. Appeals to the reason of unreasonable men would have had little effect: and they had no power to force inward conviction, any more than outward profession. They employed, therefore, the only expedient, as bad a one as it was, that they had, sufficient to force both; the dread of superior power, maintained and cultivated by superstition, and applied by policy.

What now was the case of the famous legislator Moses? Some excuse for the former will result, I think, from this comparison. When God remembered his covenant with Abraham, an absurd expression, but very theological, the descendants of Abraham had forgot their God. They were become Egyptians, that is, they were attached to the country, and still more attached to all the superstitions of it. They were constrained by miracles to abandon one; but no miracles, no interpositions of Providence could oblige them to abandon the other. God was forced, therefore, to indulge them in several superstitious prejudices, as learned divines scruple not to affirm; and in fact it appears, that a great part of the ritual observances and laws of the Egyptians and of the Israelites were the same, or so near alike, as to leave no doubt of their having one common origin. This even Herman Witzius cannot deny. He allows, that there was a great and wonderful conformity between them, "magnam atque mirandam con-"venientiam in religionis negotio;" and therefore

fore he would persuade, if he could, against the plainest evidence that antiquity can furnish on any subject, that the Egyptians borrowed these institutions from the Israelites, the masters from their scholars and their slaves; which could not mend the matter neither extremely, if it could be shown, as he attempted very weakly to show it, against Marsham and Spencer.

But you will ask, and a reasonable question it will be, why was God forced to indulge his people in these superstitions? The divine has his answer ready; because it becomes Infinite Wisdom, to do nothing by extraordinary and supernatural means, which may be done by ordinary and natural; and because wise governors compound, as it were, often with obstinacy, and indulge men in some prejudices, that they may draw them off the more effectually from others*. For these weighty reasons,

* Thus it is divines account for the many Egyptian rites, that were preserved in the Mosaical institution, by assuming, that God ordered it so out of indulgence to his chosen people, who were strongly attached to the religion and manners of Egypt, and in order to reconcile them to his law, by a little mixture of superstition in the ceremonious part of it. Let another assumption, made on the same principle, and more presumptuous, if that be possible, than the former, be mentioned. It is this. That sincere, pious, and learned man, Mr. Whiston, supposes, in his new theory of the Earth, that the sun, moon, and stars, were made before the six days work of the creation began; though they are said to have been made at the same time, according to the obvious sense of the words of Moses. They are said then first to be, or to be made, only because they became first conspicuous then, and their

reasons, the God of truth chose to indulge errour, and suited his institutions to the taste of the age, " ad

bodies distinctly visible, as in a clear day or night they now appear to us, according to Mr. Whiston. The point is delicate, and therefore the good man thought himself obliged to account, as well as he could, for this apparent, and I fear real difference between Moses and him. He says, in the first place, that Moses wrote in this manner, because it was necessary to secure the Jews from the adoration of the Host of Heaven. There was no other way to apply a fitting remedy to that prevailing custom. The worship of terrestrial things was demonstrated, by this account of their original, to be foolish and absurd; but that of the celestial bodies would have seemed permitted, at least, if they too had not been included in the same relation. He says, in the next place, that we ought to look on the Mosaic history of the creation, as on a journal of the appearances of things, such a one as an honest and observing spectator on the earth would have made and have believed true, though it was not agreeable to the reality of things. Now to the first of these bold assumptions there lies a most cruel objection, of which Mr. Whiston takes no notice. If Moses had told the Jews, that the celestial bodies were created beings, as well as our earth, though created before, even long before it, they would have believed him as soon, and have been as effectually armed against idolatrous worship, by a true representation, as they believed him, and were thus armed by an untrue one. Another objection, indeed, Mr. Whiston supposes might be made to him, and he answers it plausibly enough; for though there might be no spectator to observe and record what passed, yet if the nature of the history required it, Moses might very properly represent things as they would have appeared to any such spectator who had been present. But Mr. Whiston immediately destroys the force, such as it is, of his own answer. To speak my mind freely," says he, " I " believe, that the Messias was actually present, that he " made the journal, that he delivered it after to Moses on " Mount

"ad sæculi gustum et usum," says Spencer. For these weighty reasons, he would not enlighten the understandings, soften the hearts, nor determine the wills of his chosen people: though he had hardened the heart of Pharaoh a little before against the strongest manifestations of almighty power; which is, I presume, as extraordinary and supernatural an operation, as that of softening the heart to yield to such manifestations. We may carry this farther. God contented himself, according to these bold judges of the principles and views of his proceedings, to take ordinary and na-

"Mount Sinai, and from thence it appears in the front of his "Pentateuch at this day." It is no longer Moses then, who represents things untruly, but such as they would have appeared to an honest spectator. It is the Messias who represents them untruly to Moses, and deceives others deliberately, for he could not be deceived himself, to prevent, by this fallacy, an evil, that would have been prevented just as well by the truth. Whatever rank Mr. Whiston is pleased to allow the Messias, he should have respected this divine person enough, not to impute to him a false journal, made for an unnecessary purpose. But this he does: while other divines impute to the Supreme Being an indulgence to the superstitious prejudices and habits of the Israelites, though reason, as well as experience, shows, that these means, which they assume that Infinite Wisdom employed, were in no sort proportionable to the end which they assume that the same wisdom proposed. These are the profane effects of theological presumption. I would sooner be reputed, nay, I would sooner be, a Pagan than a Christian, or an Atheist than a Theist; if to be one or the other it was necessary to believe such absurdities as these; which, however disguised, and softened by a certain cant of expression, are directly profane, and indirectly, or, by consequence, at least, blasphemous.

tural

tural means in a case to which they were not adequate, as he must have known, in his prescience, that they would not be, and as we know, by the history of these people, that they were not; their whole history being a continued series of difficult conversions from idolatry, and easy relapses to it. By this comparison it appears then already, that Moses, who pretended to be directed and authorised by God himself, indulged the Israelites in many favourite superstitions; as profane legislators indulged the people, with whom they had to do.

But since I am got thus far into this subject, allow me to take a step or two more, and to raise from the dead one of those ancient sages, who gave laws to heathen nations, and instituted religions among them. Let me suppose, that one of our learned divines summed up the accusation against him and his brethren, and contradistinguished them from the legislator of the Hebrew people, thus. Notwithstanding the conformity between some ritual laws and observances of this people, and of the Egyptians, and the frequent apostacies of the former, the knowledge of the one true God was preserved among them by the Mosaic dispensation, while polytheism and idolatry overspread the rest of the world. Thus the great design of God was effected; and thus the whole œconomy of Divine Providence is justified. Would the ancient sage be left without any reply? I think not.

He might insist, in his own excuse, that Moses, like

like profane lawgivers *, did not only indulge the people in some favourite habitual superstitions, but in others of his own institution; and that his predilection for all these over the real duties of natural religion made him inflict more severe penalties on those who violated the former, than on those who violated the latter. He might insist, that, among the superstitions of Mosaic institution, there was one, which could be charged neither on the Egyptian, nor any other heathen nation, and which surpassed the most extravagant of theirs. Beside the gods, which may be said to have been, as it were, in common, a local tutelary divinity was assumed by every city or nation, and was distinguished and appropriated by a particular appellation. This superstition, he would assert, that Moses imitated, and abused, and aggravated by his imitation. Though polytheism and idolatry overspread the world, might he say, the existence of the Monad, or the Unity of the one Supreme Being, was not unknown to many of us. We could not teach this doctrine with success to the vulgar, uncapable of conceiving things purely intellectual, but we taught it to those who were initiated into our mysteries: and if we did not propose the true God as an object of publick and

* Proclive est observare, Deum cuilibet legi rituali, manu elatâ, hoc est protervè et ex præmeditato violatæ, supplicium extremum statuisse; quum tamen peccatis suâ naturâ gravioribus, fornicationi, furto, proximi mutilationi, et ejusmodi, pœnas longe mitiores irrogavit. Spen. l. 1, c. 1.

popular

popular adoration, neither did we bring the notions of him down to the low and gross conceptions of the multitude, nor expose the majesty of this awful Being to their profanations. This Moses did. He would not consent to take upon him the commission he was appointed to execute, nor go to the children of Israel, till he was able to tell them the name of the God who sent him. In compliance with his importunity, and with the prejudices of the people, to whom he was sent, God is said to have given himself a name, a very magnificent one indeed, and such a one as might denote the Supreme Being; but still a name, by which he was to be distinguished as the tutelary God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of one family first, and then of one nation particularly, and almost exclusively of all others.

Our ancient sage might add, that the least part of the miracles, wrought among the Israelites with so much profusion, and in a continued series of divine interpositions, would have been more than sufficient to draw any other nation, nay, all the nations of the Earth, from polytheism and idolatry. That in this case, neither he nor any other legislator would have found it difficult, by propagating the belief and worship of the true God, to civilise savage people, without having recourse to the expedient they employed. That as they were in a case very different, they deserve excuse and pity rather than blame, for promoting natural religion and good government at the expense of true theology. But that Moses deserves neither excuse

excuse nor pity, since he chose to make use of superstitions which he did not want, nay which defeated, instead of securing, his intent, if his intent was to destroy idolatry by the means of them: for the sage would insist, with great appearance of reason; first, that the true God was made known to the Israelites by such manifestations of himself to them, and that his law was promulgated in so solemn and awful a manner, if there is any truth in the Jewish traditions, as to leave no pretence for adding any thing to confirm the knowledge or to enforce the law. He would insist in the next place, that if the apostacies of the Israelites, after such manifestations and declarations of the one true God, can be any way accounted for, it must be by the effect of the very expedient, which our divines pretend, that Infinite Wisdom employed to prevent these apostacies. He would conclude in short, that Moses and the heathen legislators employed the same means, with this difference, that these means were better proportioned to their end than to his; since they designed to govern mankind by superstition; and he meaned, or as divines presume to tell us, God meaned, to destroy idolatry by indulgence to the very superstitions out of which it grew. Upon the whole matter, whether the first sages are intirely excusable or not, their proceeding was much more reasonable than that which was followed by the order, and under the immediate direction of God himself, as these Eunomians, who affect to understand the whole secret

secret of the divine œconomy, and to know God as well as he knows himself, have the boldness to assert.

Though I have said thus much, in excuse for those who were the first to establish religion and government, I shall not attempt any excuse for those who succeeded them, and who cultivated errour and superstition on a principle of private ambition. This might be the case sometimes, and to some degree, among the most savage people in ancient days, as we see that it is in our own age among the wild nations of America and Africa, who have their conjurers and their diviners, and who practise certain foolish rites under their direction. It was more so, no doubt, when little states began to be formed by assemblages of a few roving families, that fixed themselves in societies, under the conduct of some leader of their own, or of some foreign legislator; the memory of which events has been preserved in the fabulous traditions that are come down to us concerning Orpheus and others; for a certain concurrence of fabulous traditions may hold out with sufficient evidence some general truths. But we have, if I mistake not, in the story of Pythagoras, an example of errour and superstition, propagated on a motive of private ambition, that is more circumstantial and better vouched.

Pythagoras came into Italy with great advantages for effecting his purposes. He came among Greeks, divided into some little states, under very unsettled governments. He came, with great

great reputation of learning, and wisdom, and sanctity, from a nation renowned for it's antiquity, for civil policy, and for divine mystery; from a nation from whom the first rudiments of civility and even the use of letters had been imported into Greece, the mother country of all these little states. He had a figure; for even that has been thought worthy of mention, to inspire respect to those who were to be taken by the eye. He had eloquence to lead those who were to be led by the ear: and his miracles, for miracles are easily imposed on people ignorant or superstitious, and the people Pythagoras had to do with were both, made him easily pass for the Pythian or Hyperborean Apollo, for one of the genii that were supposed to inhabit the moon, or for a celestial divinity.

He opened his school and began his mission at Crotona, where his orations to the old men, to the young men, to the women, and to the children, and much more the miracle of fish, which Jamblicus relates so circumstantially, gained him admittance and established his credit. As his first school or college, so his first church, was founded here. I may call it by that name, after Clement of Alexandria, and may observe, after that father likewise, a conformity between the Pythagorean and Christian institutions in this respect. Persons of all ages and sexes, who were converted by the miracles and sermons of Pythagoras, resorted to this church. They were instructed in the public doctrines of his religion, and in those divine

divine truths, which they were to believe first, in hopes of understanding them afterwards; which is the very method that St. Austin in some part of his works prescribes to Christian converts. Some few, and such alone as he judged proper after a long and severe probation, like that he had gone through himself in Egypt, and from which neither the recommendations of Polycrates, nor the favour of Amasis, could exempt him, were admitted into his college, that became a seminary of enthusiasts. They lived there like Cenobites, members of this spiritual family, renouncing their own, and throwing their whole substance into the common stock. Their long silence, their abstinences, their self-denial, their purifications, their austerities, and the torments to which they submitted, prepared them for any trials, to which they could be possibly exposed in the propagation of their master's spiritual empire.

In such an age, and with such ministers as these, men devoted to him, and ready to be martyrs for him, he could not have failed to succeed among a people, who were already prepared, by the errours and superstitions of their former institutions, for any that the scheme of his ambition could render it necessary to impose. But he and his disciples showed this scheme too grossly and too soon: for notwithstanding all the fine things that are said of this famous person by Porphyry, Jamblicus, and other writers; and notwithstanding all the obscurity and imperfection of traditions concerning these Grecian colonies, it seems apparent

parent enough that the accusations of Cylo and Nino were not void of truth, nor the jealousy that prevailed groundless. Pythagoras caused revolutions in several cities, in Crotona, in Sybaris, in Catana, for instance; and his disciples, such as Zaleucus and Charondas, if in truth they were his disciples, assumed, wherever they came, the part of legislators, whether called to it or not; as if it had been a right belonging to this religious society to give laws not only to their own, but to the civil society that admitted them likewise. Such too we may believe they pretended it was; since they all pretended to be divinely inspired: and divine inspiration, as well as divine institution, implies an authority far superior to any that is merely human. Diogenes Laertius hints that the Crotonians killed him for fear of being reduced under tyranny by him; and some traditions say, that commanding the army of the Agrigentines against the Syracusians he was beat, and killed in the pursuit.

In all cases, the declaration he was reported to have made, that he had rather be a bull for one day than an ox always, was understood; and the bull perished. Almost all his disciples perished with him: and the expulsion of this sect out of Italy may be properly enough compared to that of Christianity out of Japan. The effect was not so intire in the former as in the latter instance; since the philosophy of Pythagoras continued to be taught in Italy by Aristæus and others, who took warning and affected government no longer;

but who thought too, or pretended to think, that the gods would be displeased if they suffered so divine an institution to be extinguished.

The same spirit, and the same apprehension, did not prevail in Egypt, and the great eastern kingdoms: for which reason I persuade myself that their ecclesiastical and civil constitutions grew up together, and that people who submitted to kingly, might submit the more easily to priestly government; because the priests who had been used to lead them by superstition, had acted in concert with their kings to make these establishments. Kings wanted their influence over the people; the people wanted their influence over kings: and kings and people were both silly enough to imagine that they wanted such a protection from the gods, and such an intercourse with Heaven, as these prophets and seers, and magicians, and priests, for we may jumble them all together, could alone procure.

END OF THE FIFTH VOLUME.

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